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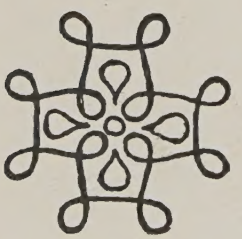
PRINCIPLES OF DECORATION

BY

R. G. HATTON

Author of *Figure Drawing; Figure Composition; The Craftsman's Plant-Book; Perspective;* and *Design*



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PREFACE

THE illustrations in this book have been drawn in strong outline so that they may the more readily be coloured. In their uncoloured state they are somewhat ineffective, but a few washes will redeem this deficiency. In some cases suggestions for the colouring have been given. But the necessary instructions are always somewhat uncertain, and, when the designs are not of the very simplest kind, are so lengthy, that it has been thought best to leave the colouring, in the majority of instances, to the reader's own judgment. Those who attempt to colour the illustrations are advised to begin with Chapters 33 and 34. The study of those chapters ought to help them in managing the colour elsewhere. Sometimes a degree of opacity in the colour will be found of advantage, so that the black lines of the design may be qualified.

The principles of an art provide sanction for variations in style and treatment : a principle is hardly so to be called if its application is confined to the work of a period, or of a man. Hence our

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illustrations might all have been taken from historic examples, and might have exhibited the greatest diversity. But it has been felt that the book will better serve as an aid in present-day decoration if the designs are without reference to the past, and consequently they have been drawn in the author's own manner. Some few exceptions will be noted. But there is here no intention to examine critically what has been done before. In another volume such a task may be undertaken.

The tenor of the book is, on the whole, to urge the decorator to approach his work with the triple intention of making it vivacious and effective, intellectual, and interesting, and to proceed as if no decoration had ever existed before—not from conceit of his own abilities, nor in contempt of the past, but in order to get rid of the tendency to use inherited ornamental and decorative forms, so many of which are neither vivacious nor interesting.

The present work will be found in no respect to overlap the author's previously published book, *Design : The Making of Patterns*, and, indeed, approaches the subject from a very different point of view.

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CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE OF DECORATION

DECORATION is the elaboration, for certain artistic and social reasons, of the appearance of an object of use.

The primary artistic purpose is to produce a sense of vitality. The simplest way to do this is by a Revel of Colour, which may be no more than splashes of red and black on white. The second artistic purpose of decoration is to make something interesting. There are two ways of doing this, and both are illustrated in Fig. 1. One of them is to present forms which we recognise, as a ship, or which have meaning, as words, symbols, heraldry. The other way is to present forms which are intellectually interesting, but which have no meaning, or, at least no suggestion of reality—these are geometrical elements.

The social purpose of decoration is to connect the world of our needs to the world of our thoughts. At different times men have differently assessed the relative importance of the economics of life on the one hand, and the world of thought

on the other, but to however small a place they have, in times of great artistic activity, reduced the expression of the economic side, they have yet retained it, and by retaining it have set their seal of approval, and, indeed, of reverence, upon it. Thus does decoration not only interpret man's conception of his life, and disclose his conviction that now thought and fancy, now ways and means, are the more important elements in it, but it affirms his contentment.

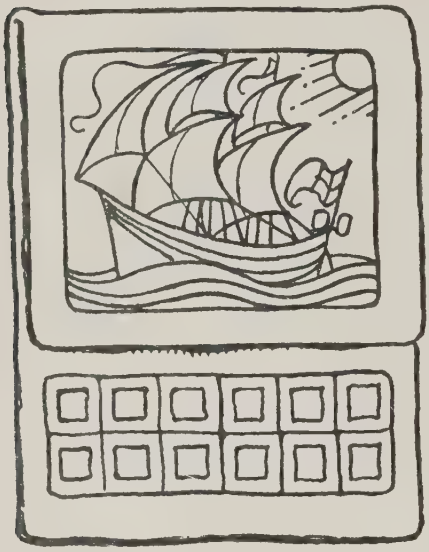
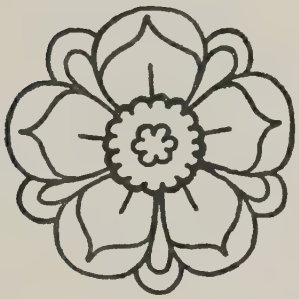
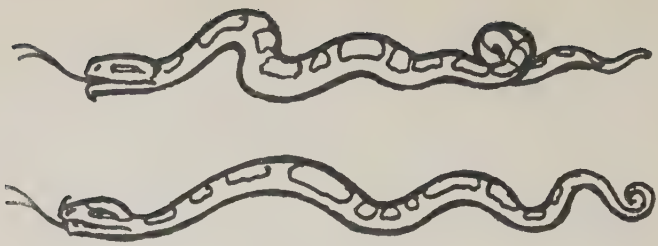


Fig. 1.

If we colour the decoration for a bag in Fig. 1 with red, so as to make a glad effect — using, say, two or three different hues of red—as scarlet, crimson and orange—we have an example of these several purposes in one. The red is the revel of gladness, the ship is something recollected, the lines of the ship and the chequer-pattern below are intellectual or geometrical, the bag is a thing of use. Let us note that neither the red and black of the revel, nor the ship, nor

the geometrical pattern, have anything whatever to do with the bag. In brief, the art of decoration is one of uniting three totally alien elements —Effect, Subject and Object.

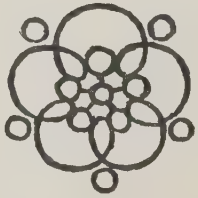


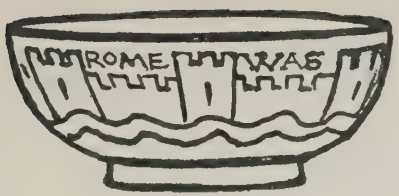


CHAPTER 2

ORIGINALITY

THE Serpent which enters into the artistic paradise is the fear of not being original. People get the idea that designing is finding the never-seen-before. This is a great mistake. It is stupid to dodge the sensible solution of a problem merely because something of the sort has been seen before. Any one can decorate, because any one can sufficiently master some simple means of making a glad effect. The samplers of our great-grandmothers were sets of units to be applied to various circumstances. Their application demanded taste and judgment—proportion, colour, and position, had to be designed. From that came the touch of originality, ancient as the motifs were.





CHAPTER 3

THE WORKS OF NATURE AND THE WORKS OF MAN

Let us notice two great differences between the works of Nature and the works of Man, for otherwise we might not give Man enough liberty. Nature, in forming her products, works from within, and makes her material as she goes along. Man must work from without and, perforce, with material designed for another purpose. He must stand at this side, or at that, of his work as he does it. His means are crude, and are limited almost to a to-and-fro and a round-and-round motion. His works are therefore coarsely geometrical ; and, since they must stand the strain of production as well as of use, are clumsy beyond their needs.

And secondly, Nature can elaborate her forms to whatever magnificence she will, and yet not overstep the bounds of reasonable development. But Man may not elaborate his structures more than a little ; and, therefore, what elaboration

of appearance he undertakes, in order to join his thoughts to his needs, must be done by adding ideas, and these have nothing to do with the thing he is making. Hence, upon a bowl is a fish, a horse, a tree, a town—or what you will.

CHAPTER 4

KINDS OF BEAUTY

It will be convenient in our study to use these three terms—Æsthetic Quality or Pure Beauty, False Beauty, and True Beauty. The first of these—pure beauty—we will deal with at some length in the next chapter, and here will only say that it differs from true beauty in that true beauty, whatever else it may be, is related to perfection of function and meaning, whereas æsthetic quality is not. Sampson Lennard expressed this in the rich manner of his day in his translation of a little book by the Italian, Buoni :

" Because all things being the effects of one and the same Nature, which is a benign mother unto all, it was not convenient,* that anything should bee in his degree deformed : but that all thinges according to their due formes should have some perfection of Beauty ; and as the Pecocke is faire, the Eagle faire, the Swan, the Lyon, faire, so should the Serpent be faire, the Crocodile, the Aspe, in their kindes : from which Beauty is framed that universall Beauty of this inferiour created world : which is a kind of foote steppe of the divine Beauty."—*Problemes of Beautie.* A.D. 1606.

Perhaps it may be that the charm of decorative

* it was not proper that it should come to pass, that . . .

art is in the usefulness, or function, of the thing decorated—*object* we may call it—whereby the condition which is present in true beauty is established also in our necessary handicraft ; and cold, pure beauty, or æsthetic quality, is united to the familiar needs of our daily life.

False beauty is that which belies natural function. It occurs in nature very frequently ; particularly in protective colouring and patterning. The beauty of the hair, cheeks, lips and eyes seems to us hardly functional. Yet these beauties are appropriate. They are marks of genus, or kind, higher than functional. They ennoble the being, and by that only way which can give nobleness, by some quality which is proper, but unnecessary.

Such beauties it has been the practice of Man to enhance, but the enhancement when carried beyond a certain degree produces a false beauty, carrying the person out of genus. Thus comes degeneration ; but by degeneration we do not mean a sinking into baseness, but a transmutation into something else, rich and strange, perhaps. Facial " make-up " and costume from time immemorial have been employed to transform ordinary people into beings of another kind, whether medicine-men, warriors, or Watteau shepherdesses. The powdered hair and made-up face of the beauty is the guise of a sort of existence which is not the person's own, but it may be an

attempt to reach the person's ideal of self. At what stage this adornment ceases to be an enhancement of true character, when it ranks as true beauty, and begins to carry the subject into a new genus or species, people at different times will differently determine, but ultimately it must reach the stage of definitely false beauty. Thus the heads in Fig. 2 may be beautiful, but their beauty is not that of the human head. It is a false beauty.

Fig. 2.

Such false beauty is widely prevalent in decoration. A trick is played upon the mind—the form has identity, as in Fig. 2, the head is a head, yet it also is not a head. The mind becomes filled with two ideas, different, and held together by a trick.

An advantage which accrues in decoration through the use of false beauty is in the avoidance of the "contingencies" or "consequences" which follow upon realism. If the heads in Fig. 2 were more realistic they would rouse in the mind a demand for a continuation of the statement.

To the head the mind would demand a neck, to the neck a body, and so on. The touch of unreality prevents this demand arising. In one way or another the decorator has to avoid the consequences following upon realism. Here he does it by avoiding realism itself.

CHAPTER 5

ÆSTHETIC QUALITY

ÆSTHETIC Quality is that arrangement of form or colour which delights the eye but does not stir the thought. Although there may be philosophical objection to so strong a statement, it is safest, from a practical point of view, to aver that there is no such thing as pure beauty, or æsthetic quality which exists alike for all people. For æsthetic quality is the value which we each, separately and individually, place upon an appearance. We might, indeed, quote WITHER'S couplet :

> " If she be not so to me,
> What care I how fair she be."

—for that is the position of the case.

We each have what we may call an *æsthetic prejudice*, which is the product of a store of experiences in which something perceived by the senses has been linked with the notion of rightness, or desirability, through the experience occurring at the same time as the mind has been under the impression that things are right.

Doubtless the store begins to accumulate in early infancy, through our touch of our bodies.

We always think that our bodies are right. Even our deformities are not hateful, really, to us. The hatred of the deformed is of those people who hold them in scorn. The deformed seek to prove, by excellence of action, that the deformity, which the scornful regard as proof of incapacity, is no hindrance, and therefore no deformity.

"Whoever hath any thing fixed in his Person that doth induce Contempt, hath also a perpetual Spur in himself to rescue and deliver himself from Scorn . . . which must be either by Virtue or Malice."—BACON: Essay XLIV. *Of Deformity*.

Since our æsthetic opinion is built up of experiences which are beyond recall, it is, like our manner of speech, something we have grown up with, and, therefore, hard to amend. Each of us stands with his own prejudice; each with his own likes and dislikes. So there is no accounting for tastes till one has accounted for persons.

"Dyversë folk dyversëly they seyde."
CHAUCER: Prologue to the *Reeve's Tale*.

This—our æsthetic prejudice—is subject, however, to what we see as time passes; each thing seen tending to give a bias in this, or in that, direction. He, therefore, that can keep himself free from these passing influences—these ripples upon the surface of his intelligence—is accounted a man of taste. And a man may do well to carry such a thing as a Greek coin about with him, that

by looking upon it, now and again, he may keep himself in good judgment.

Our only hope of improving our taste lies in adding to our store of experiences the observation in untroubled moments of things which we have reason to believe are good.

The study of the nude figure is the surest grounding in taste.

Æsthetic prejudice is closely connected with artistic *pleasure*. When we speak of a thing of beauty giving us pleasure we do not mean that it affords pastime, or diversion, or amusement. Artistic pleasure is felt when the *circuit* of æsthetic experience is completed. We have an outer conscious mind, and an inner, unconscious or sub-conscious, mind—or so we may define the mental position. The outer conscious mind does not know the content of, nor the desire deep within the inner mind ; but it knows that some desire is there. And the expectation that there will something new befall—an expectation which is the chief mark of our being human—keeps the outer mind sharply on the look-out. When, therefore, there is made to the senses a material manifestation, it is communicated to the mind, and is compared with the æsthetic expectation, which is, as it were, the æsthetic prejudice in an active state. If agreement occurs, the circuit is completed, and pleasure is felt. The measure of agreement is the measure of pleasure.

Though the material manifestation and the æsthetic prejudice agree, and it is their impact which produces the consciousness of pleasure, this consciousness yet has about it some measure of surprise, as if the beautiful were somewhat strange, as BACON pointed out in his essay *Of Beauty*. This strangeness is not, however, as the men of the Baroque thought, in the beautiful thing itself, but in the hitherto unknown richness of the ideas stored in the soul, and of which the external mind has not been aware before. Through the material manifestation, whether of nature, or of art, the soul is revealed to herself.

By using the word *soul* we have intended to embrace in this explanation all the powers of our being by which expectation is formed, and the corresponding manifestation is received, just as we would not measure beauty merely by what we are here calling æsthetic quality—as if it were melody without meaning.

But of this melody without meaning, although it is but a part of beauty, we must not think lightly. It is not a mere tissue-paper wrapping to a jewel. It is an expression of life when thought of in a general, or an abstract, way. It means I AM : I LIVE—and it is well worthy of note how comforting, indeed how necessary, is this all-embracing message to mankind. Its very vagueness gives it a wide scope.

And since it is not confined in meaning, and

relates to nothing at all, and so to everything in general, and can be expressed in anything that sense can comprehend—sound, form, colour, line, movement—it can be, and therefore should be, omnipresent. For *what can be must be*. If a form which, say, means leaf, can also by its form express the abstract idea I AM : I LIVE, it must do so. And hence, of course, comes the truth that the mechanically reproduced is artistically deficient, and the hand-made artistically replete, for

FIG. 3.

the one says life is thus limited, the other that life is overflowing.

We cannot escape from the conclusion that whether æsthetic quality is the greatest, or the least, of the qualities which make up decoration, it must certainly always be present, and therefore it is the first quality to be present.

So it is of no use the decorator stirring a finger unless he is assured that he has æsthetic sensibility, and that its application is a matter of first consequence.

He can judge of this by trying such exercises as these which follow. If he cannot maintain

interest in them he is deficient in æsthetic sensibility, and there is no reason why he should presume to produce decoration.

Fig. 4.

Exercise 1.—Draw a circle (or a square) and across it draw four similar lines, crosswise. The shape of the lines, and their distance apart, decide the form and proportion of the spaces between and around them. Watch, therefore, as you draw the lines, the spaces which are produced.

Exercise 2.—A series of rectangles of different proportions.

Exercise 3.—Here, upon two crossed lines as basis, lodge first a square with curved sides on the crossing, and on each arm a heart-shape, and, to complete the unity of the scheme, four small circles in the vacant spaces. Shape, size and position control the effect, and render the form æsthetically pleasing or not.

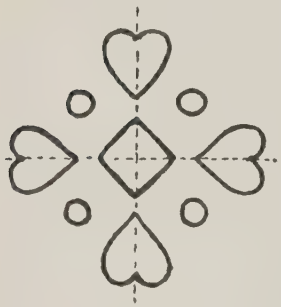
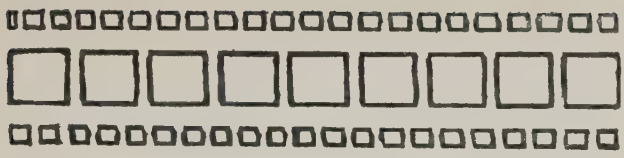


Fig. 5.

To each of these exercises there are, of course, innumerable answers.



CHAPTER 6

MELODY

We borrow the word melody from music because the words used in the theory of the arts of form and colour do not so well suggest an effort to secure beauty. By melody we understand an arrangement which maintains its interest for a spell long enough to convey a message, vague as it may be. Melody is more than harmony, it is harmony with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Without power to produce melody the decorator can do nothing. He must not confuse the question by introducing meaning or significance, welcome as they may be. Let him first master the simple cases.

Melody is a mixture of constancy, uniformity, repetition, with variety or difference. Perhaps the simplest example which we can take is a row of squares, as in the headpiece above. If we colour these all alike we certainly have an expression of continuity and permanence. The white spaces between the squares, by adding a contrast of colour and tone, introduce a lively effect.

But the liveliness is much increased if we paint

the squares, one yellow, three blue, all along the row. As we have drawn nine squares this coloration will give a symmetrical result, which is an expression of organic structure.

It is clear that the interplay is greatly increased by even such simple means of elaboration as are employed in the examples in Fig. 6. Because these forms repeat the same characteristics we may say that they *rhyme*.

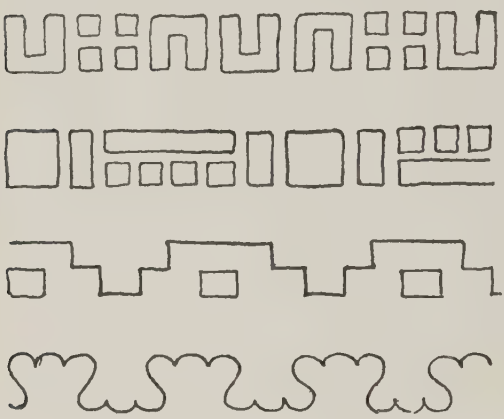


Fig. 6.

In these examples the arrangements are rather melodic phrases than melodies, for a melody is of longer continuance. These melodic phrases repeat over and over again, like the tune of a simple dance, or of an old ballad.

Melodies and melodic phrases are, of course, matters of proportion. To train himself in producing them the artist must make masses of different sizes, and arrange them together. He may take simple rectangles of the same height and different lengths, as in Fig. 4. It is sometimes recommended as an exercise for the young

that they should design patterns upon squared paper. This advice, like so much more which seems easily to open a golden door into success, is fallacious; for in the development of the æsthetic faculties the freedom to make *any* dimension is essential.

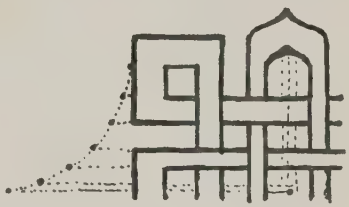


Fig. 7.

To determine what the length of one form in relation to others shall be, the artist must open his eyes wide, and take in the several forms, letting his mind do the judging by itself. First one form is drawn, and gazed at, so that the dimensions of it can enter the mind. Then, as another is added, the process of drawing it begins with a point, where the first edge of it starts. The eye sees this point, and at once runs to all the points, and lines, of the previously drawn mass. It thus relates this point to them. Then from the point the first line of the second form is drawn, and, as the pencil makes it, the eye watches it, as it lengthens, and while doing so, looks at all the lengths hitherto established in the design, taking

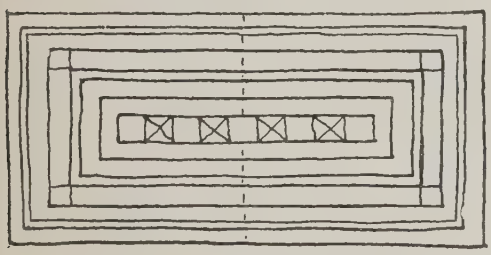


Fig. 8.

note just as much of the intervening spaces, as of the lines and masses themselves.

In some of the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon patterns the inner bands of interlacings are narrower than the outer. This automatically introduces the varied elements of melody, and makes melodic expression easier, if not secure. A graduated net, as in Fig. 7, illustrates this.

Fig. 9.

And we may note that there is a similar automatic variation of dimensions in such plannings as Figs. 8 and 9.

In the former, although the lines are at the same distance apart all round, the proportion of side to end in the rectangles is progressively altering. This would not, of course, occur with a square. In Fig. 9 a very considerable melodic change is taking place in the curves, although they are all arcs of concentric circles.

CHAPTER 7

THE IMMUTABILITY OF HARMONY

If our æsthetic sense, which is the basis of our feeling for harmony, is grounded in a store of experiences, as we have asserted in Chapter 5, we are under its domination, and it rules us so completely that it will not permit us to allow change in anything which appears to us to be harmonious.

Hence harmony reinforces the truth ; but it also affirms the untrue. Why Plato banished the poets from his ideal republic is best known to classical scholars, but he could have counted against them that it was in their power to make the false seem true. Instances of this power are plentiful enough. There is the Lancashire rhyme which describes a church service, and the parson preaching—

> " How Sisera kill'd Jael
> With a hammer and nail,
> And Jonah he liv'd i' th' inside of a whale."

The inversion of the facts reminds us of the apology which Richard Brathwaite makes in his *Note upon the Errata's* in his *Drunken Barnaby's Four Itineraries*—

" If my metre's backward nature
Set before what shou'd be later :
As for instance is exprest there,
Harrington after Godmanchester. . . ."

And Sir PHILIP SIDNEY, in his *Defence of Poesie*, says—

" Of all sciences . . . is our poet the Monarch. For he dooth not only show the way, but giveth so sweete a prospect into the way, as will intice any man to enter into it."

To reach the condition of immutability is the aim of all artists of the classic school. To gain this they reduce their expressions to a simple and clear state, relying upon a few forms, exquisitely chosen. Proportion becomes therefore of the utmost importance. The student of art almost always tries to correct his work by *adding* more lines or features. Addition may serve, and in theory ought to, but it involves an increase of the elements to be handled, which invites disaster, and moreover, and what is worse, deflects the attention from the business in hand, which is to correct what is wrong, to a constant preoccupation with new interests. Hence it is better always to correct by finding a more perfect proportion for the forms already introduced, and to reduce their number rather than to add to it.

The design in Fig. 10 is an illustration of *dividing the area*, as we explain below in Chapter 11. If the various parts into which the area is

divided are harmonious amongst themselves they are immutable, and so is the whole. The social value of this immutability is very great—it makes our common things such as must not be changed,

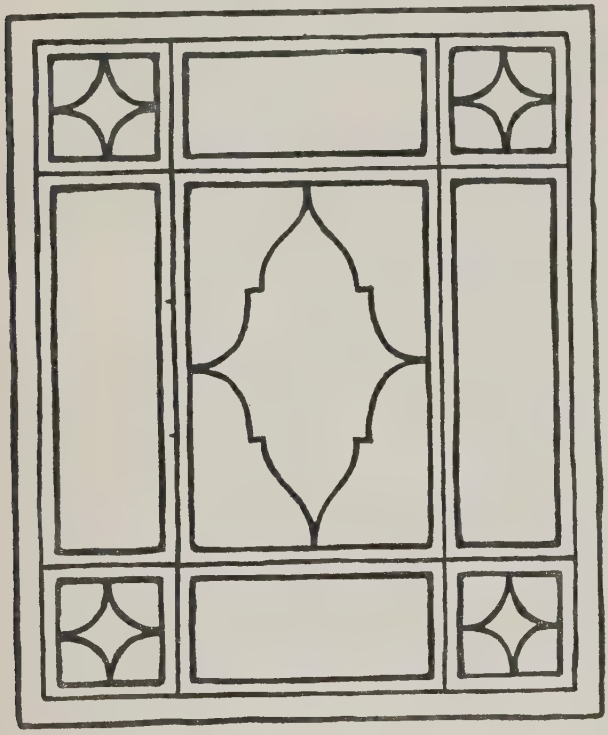


Fig. 10.

it gives them sanction, and declares them sacred and inviolable.

The sanction produced by the harmony of parts is peculiarly illustrated in the case of an unsymmetrical form in a rectangle. The rect-

angle *ACDB*, Fig. 11, is too near the form for their discordance not to be noticeable. A larger rectangle, *SVWT*, reduces the discordance by

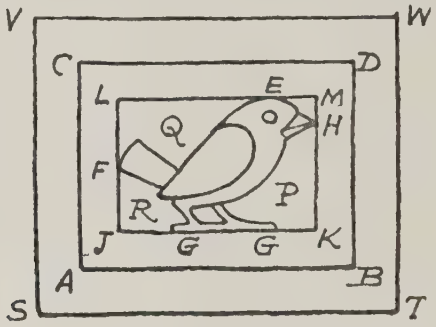


Fig. 11.

drowning it in a large expanse. But if the rectangle is close up, as *JLMK*, and the form by slight manipulation made such that the spaces *R*, *Q*, *P* are harmonious, the unsymmetrical form becomes immutably connected with the rectangle.

CHAPTER 8

PROPORTION

Rules of proportion and geometrical means of obtaining harmonious dimensions are unreliable. Viollet-le-Duc has some magic triangles in the Ninth Lecture of his *Lectures on Architecture*, but what he says is of no practical value, any more than are the expensive volumes which every now and then appear with golden rules for designing cathedrals.

From Vitruvius onwards writers on art have looked for the basis of our sense of proportion in the human figure. The columns of architecture and the Roman capital letters have alike been found to derive their beauty from the proportions of the figure. These writers were not far from the truth, but they made the error of trying to transfer the actual proportions of the figure to their work. They never actually did so ; but that was their theory.

Now if it is true, as we have asserted in Chapter 5, that we derive much of our notion of what is desirable in form from our own bodies, there ought to be some general similarity, in spirit and idea, if not in actual dimensions, between

the form of our bodies and our notions of proportion.

Perhaps the basis is as much the head, or the face, as the whole body, for we must recognise that though first acquaintance with form is by touch, sight very soon supplants it, and our observation passes from our own bodies to others, and so, ultimately to non-human subjects. Still, as we are human beings, and we cannot but believe with POPE that—

"The proper study of mankind is man,"

the human form is the right basis for our opinion.

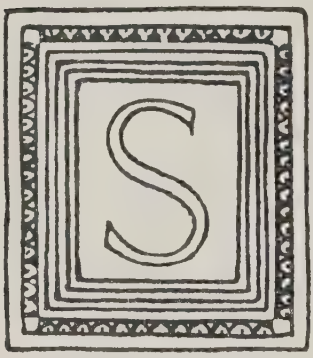


FIG. 12.

Hence, if any one ask how to find good proportion, the answer is—let your work have such proportion as you see in the figure, or in the head. As the brow is to the cheek, the cheek to the nose, the nostril to the eyelid, the eyelid to the eyelash, and so on, so let the parts of your design be to one another. Consequently those periods of art should show the most sensitive proportion, and proportion at its best, in which the study of the nude has been excellent. And this is the case ; and the fine proportion of such a relatively coarse period as the Eleventh

Century is not a fact to the contrary, for though at that time the nude was not rendered as it was by the Greeks, yet there was no other basis of taste interfering as there was apparently in late Gothic times, and in Victorian days, when small external nature occupied so much attention ; and therefore, at that earlier time, the natural predilection for the forms of the body may have borne sway.

The conception of proportion thus obtained may be called the *man-woman* theory. Some artists lean towards the proportions of man, as MICHELANGELO, others to those of woman, as JEAN GOUJON. It has sometimes been thought that the schemes of proportions in man and in the horse are similar. The Centaur is certainly the least monstrous of monsters. LORD HERBERT OF CHERBURY, in *A Dialogue between a Tutor and his Pupil*, has these remarks :—

FIG. 13.

". . . the horse . . . which exalts man so much ; that he takes strength, motion, and even comliness, from a good posture on horseback."

So imbued did the artists of the Renaissance become with the notion that in the human form

lay the canon of beauty that they let it colour their treatment of all inferior nature. On the other hand, artists have sometimes so kept their eyes upon inferior nature that they have failed to render the human form in its own character.

In actual procedure in design the artist should try subtle variations of the same suggestion. He should let his eye see forms which are closely similar, and leave his artistic sensibility to decide. Argument and reference to laws and principles are of no avail. He must be on his guard against comparing alternatives which differ considerably, for these reflect differences of mental intention, and are not such differences as arise in seeking perfection of proportion. The artist when in difficulties is only too ready to change his mental intention. This tendency he must resist.

The designs in Figs. 12 and 13 depend upon their proportions. In both there is a scheme of proportion—a series of sizes related together. Fig. 13 has the advantage of forms suggesting floral growth, and to that extent is freed from reliance upon proportion. In Fig. 12 the curve of the S provides a large range of dimensions. There is, of course, the contrast between the curve and the straight lines, by which the eye is provided with different movements, but there can be little doubt that part of the charm of the relationship of curve to straight is in the range of dimensions which is necessarily created.

CHAPTER 9

SCALE

SCALE is the same as proportion, but is rather proportion when applied than in the abstract.

FIG. 14.

The most practical consideration of scale is in regard to the distance at which a line or patch is well seen. Scale in this sense, we may think of as the *Scale of Visibility*. We fix the distance at which the object is to be seen, normally. This is the normal distance. At that distance we find of what thickness a line must be to be effective. We do the same with a patch. We do this by experiment. Our experiments give us the smallest

patch and the thinnest line in each colour we are going to use—the smallest and thinnest which is effective, not that we can discern. We then proceed to a long distance—the greatest distance at which the object is likely to be seen—and then to a close distance, as when we take the thing in our hands, and look closely at it.

Wall decoration, as a piece of embroidery or tapestry, affords us a good example. We may be quite close to it. We do not want then to see a mere jumble which carries no meaning. At the long distance there will be a general effect of the whole, and at a medium distance large details will be interesting.

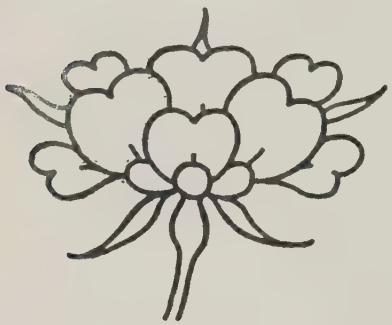


Fig. 15.

In a crude way Fig. 14 illustrates this. *A* is obviously for nearer inspection than *B*. Except that *A* and *B* may have a general effect at long range, they are only to be seen pleasantly at one distance. In *C* the two distances are both present, and that peculiar and enchanting psychological condition of things is set up in which the mind moves in and out amongst impressions requiring different kinds of attention, touching different memories and points of

judgment, and contributing different notes of expression.

Next we should mention the *Scale of Effect*, and this term is particularly appropriate when what we may speak of as *reducing the scale of effect* is in operation. Fig. 15 is a flower. If we paint all its petals of one colour it will become a unit effectively visible at a certain distance. But if we colour only some of its petals, and perhaps the smallest, it becomes effectively visible at a closer distance. We have reduced the scale of its Effect. We often do this, and there is a psychological gain in our so doing, for while we see, effectively, at the nearer range, we are conscious of the whole, which we recognise belongs to a more distant range. The mind is conscious of greater nobleness of conception.

Fig. 16.

The figures in stained-glass are generally reduced in scale by changes in their colour. These changes may originate in a desire to avoid assertiveness. The result is nevertheless to reduce the scale, that is, to make the window a composition of masses smaller than the actual dimensional masses of the figures. The figures

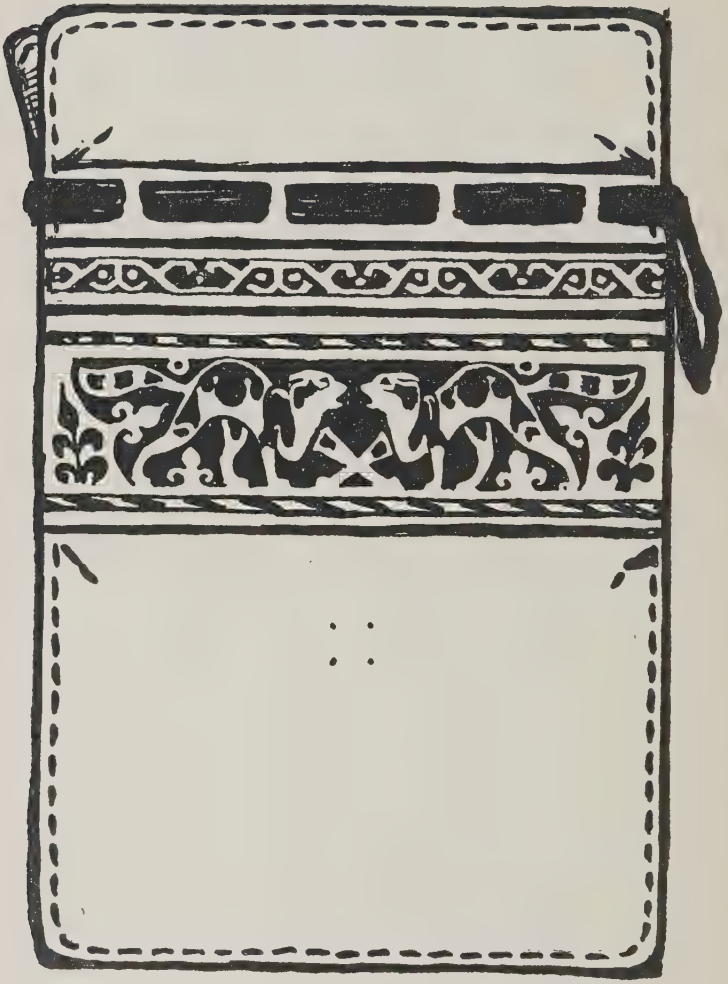


Fig. 17.

are of one scale *for importance*, and of another *for effect*.

Fig. 17 is a bag with two cats in its decoration. Is this bag suitable for a lady, or for a child? The cats are reduced in scale by being tabbied. For a child the cats may be larger than for a lady.

Fig. 18.

The poetic or mental effect or meaning is considerably affected by the scale of the detail, both as regards the size of the detail in relation to the whole object, and the relative sizes of the details amongst themselves. Large elements upon an object carry the effect towards the inconsequent, the careless, and so to the homely.

Smallness of elements carries the effect towards elegance and primness. Wedgwood pottery has a distinct flavour of the drawing-room, and of the formalities of society. When forms are bold and uncouth the effect is farmer-like, countrified, and tends to humour. When the details of the elements are large, as when the heads, hands and feet are large, and the limbs thick, the subject moves towards the familiar and the humorous. When, on the contrary, the heads, hands and feet are small, and the limbs correspondingly lithe, there is a movement towards the ideal and the fanciful. The difference between these two treatments may be well studied in the wood-cut book decorations of the Sixteenth Century. HOLBEIN used the short stout figure with large head and hands. Sometimes he gave even imaginary personages this character, with some loss of dignity. The lithe, small-headed figure had begun with MICHELANGELO, but it was in other hands that it became distinctly artificial in treatment. It flourished to a wearisome extent in the latter part of the century.

The relation of size to distance occurs in the details as well as in the masses. Fig. 19 illustrates this. The eye looks differently at the different parts.

And although we can only with difficulty, if at all, see at long range the fine details which are

meant for close inspection, we can certainly see the larger sizes at the shorter ranges. Without moving our position we are able, therefore, not only to see properly what relates to it, but in a somewhat different manner those forms which belong to other distances. Moreover we can change the focus of our vision to agree with different cases. We are able consequently to cast ourselves in and out of our range. The mind is not a little edified by this. Perhaps the mind gains a sense of infinity, of duration, and so of time. If we try a design in which there are not these differences of size we feel the same depression as we do when we suffer suspense.

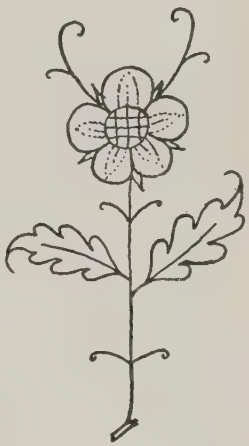


Fig. 19.

Therefore if a ghoulish effect is wanted, observe a uniformity of size in the parts. Some of the ancient Mexican and Aztec sculptured decorations have this gloomy quality. And for another reason the presence of different sizes is welcome —we need not be at one particular distance to view a thing.

The importance of variety of size raises the question of obtaining it by some formal procedure. To divide sizes constantly by the same factor, as by two, will not produce melodious

results, as trial soon proves. But if the factor is varied, as now by six, now by three, by four, and so on, a pleasing result may follow. Fig. 20 was divided in that way.

While scale is properly fixed by æsthetic predilection, it is influenced by the habit of the mind of expecting images of things thought about, to be of a certain size—a certain convenient size. We are familiar with the anomalous treatment of subjects of natural history in Elizabethan embroidery, where he caterpillar is as big as the elephant. Size in such a case does not represent the size of the things, but the comparative value of the ideas. And we commonly accept this violation of comparative size; we do not expect illustrations of natural history to be drawn to scale. The usage results in an enlargement of the small, and a reduction of the large. The more ignorant men are, the more they make everything of the same size. The equality of the different mouldings in the degenerate periods of architecture is familiar.

Fig. 20.

In some periods of art, as perhaps in the

Norman, some advantage seems to accrue from the largeness of the small members. And many instances will occur to the reader of enlargement of details in decoration, as of leaves of trees, blades of grass, etc., with very advantageous results. Indeed, we do not feel that we give bad advice if we say: Keep the details large.

If having made the details large we refine them as, say, by a line running near the edge, and introduce thereby a little extreme delicacy, we shall hardly fail to get a pleasant effect. But there is necessarily, as we have shown, a movement away from elegance and dignity and towards the homely and uncouth.

CHAPTER 10

THE OBJECT

WHEN the student has practised making melody for a long time, which is not till he is weary of doing so, but till he is thoroughly happy in it, for then only has he interest and insight enough to warrant his proceeding, he meditates being a decorator, and that means that he will essay the conjunction of his little melodies with things of use.

He therefore studies his object, and finds out what it is. Objects have an *economic form*, which is the embodiment of their usefulness in material, according to the necessities of their production. The form so defined may, or may not, be beautiful. If it is not beautiful perhaps a line or two passed around it may make it so, or at least make it sightly, and yet leave it what we should describe as plain.

When RUSKIN said that a cable-mould made building into architecture, he said what is entirely true, for he meant that architecture was the production of a man who felt the liberty to add the moulding, if by so doing he could make the building speak, as a poem or a melody does.

The plain object (if conditions are kind enough) will be an æsthetic arrangement of masses, or volumes, and this mere plain shape may be so beautiful that the object becomes a veritable melody of form. Of such shapes the Greek vases hold a pre-eminent place. Nevertheless, they were always decorated.

Decoration is not something which can be done to a form to make the unsightly pleasant to see, though it can perform that office to a certain extent. It is as much for the beautiful plain object, as for the awkward plain object. Sometimes, doubtless, when an object is known to be going to be decorated, its form is allowed to be clumsier in the plain state than it would be if it were left plain. That, indeed, is the natural condition of affairs, for shape and decoration are to become one.

It is not our purpose in this book to examine the design of the economic form, and we omit doing so, not because we pass it over slightingly, but because we have allotted ourselves a different task. We would, therefore, here affirm that the designer ought in part to be an engineer, facing problems of necessity squarely, and not needing to warp things to a supposed artistic condition.

We shall see as we proceed that decorative art decides what is the relative importance of the object, on the one hand, and of the subject, or meaning, of the decoration, on the other. But

the quality of " truth " is itself somewhat of the nature of subject. The mind can contemplate it. How, then, to preserve and even, perhaps, to state or to emphasise the truth when extraneous subject is introduced, is the paradoxical problem of decoration. For not a line can be added as decoration without truth being interfered with.

To state or to emphasise the truth, or essential characteristics of the object, we must rely upon the *modes* of decoration defined in the next chapter, upon indication of *function*, and upon disclosure of method and *material*.

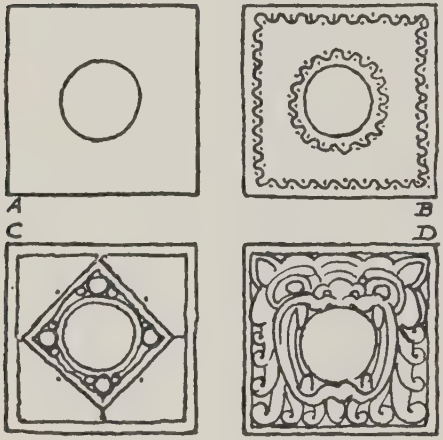


Fig. 21.

The first of these is most plainly illustrated by treating the edges which, in the next chapter, we define as the *first mode* of decoration. *A* (Fig. 21) is an object, consisting of a square with a hole in it. *B* is the same when emphasised by a restatement of its edges. In *C* occurs a departure from the strict logic of the case, for although the inner square may be said to arise out of the outer one, it does not do so logically, but through the interposition of a new idea.

In *D* the hole is the mouth of a beast, and illustrates the extreme of illogical treatment. The problem before the decorator, in the case both of *C* and *D*, is to find a basis of agreement between the object and the decoration, for logic is out of the question. Plate I. shows the doorway of SALVATOR ROSA'S house, which is No. 30 Via Gregoriana, Rome.

The second way of emphasising the object is by the statement of what is supposed to be its function, or the functions of its parts. The supposition is influenced by prejudices, which have to be concurred in, as if they were truths. For example, we have not yet come to believe that a cast-iron column is as strong as it is. Apparently our notions of strength in vertical supports are still derived from our knowledge of tree-form. Again, we expect a thing to have a capital and a base, as *A* (Fig. 22), and expect all things to have ends different from their middles, *B*. We regard the positions of members as indicating their strength, and the kind of pressure which they can submit to, or easily withstand. Thus *C* is the compressed base, *D* the upright directly-bearing

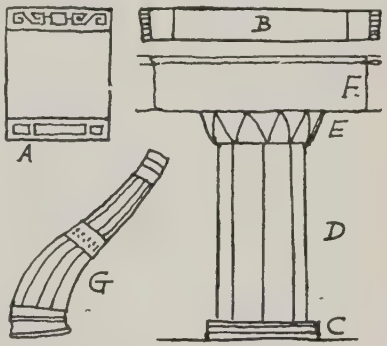


FIG. 22.

shaft, *E*, by a curious feat of judgment, is an active bearer, and is therefore lighter, and more sinuous than *D*. *F* is a down-pressing load. We also expect a longitudinal form to be lined lengthwise or in a twist, but we feel that it is stronger if banded, *G*. Lines of action and of force we expect to be marked by the directions in which they operate.

The lines upon the jug (Fig. 23) illustrate the expression of its functions of holding and pouring.

Our sense also that a thing is in itself a unit, and that its parts must not be treated separately, leads us to connect the parts by some similarity of treatment. Otherwise the display of function might end in an apparent disconnecting of the parts, as when, to imagine an extreme case, the upright stiles, *A* (Fig. 23), and the horizontal rails, *B*, of a framed door are painted with different colours. A good instance of the securing of unity in the whole by a treatment which over-rides the parts is the lines of black marble which decorate the walls and buttresses of the transept domes of the Duomo at Florence. The lines run horizontally along, over wall, window-jamb and buttress—unifying them. (See Plate II.) And it is sometimes urged as an objection to the

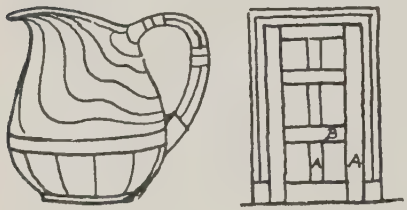


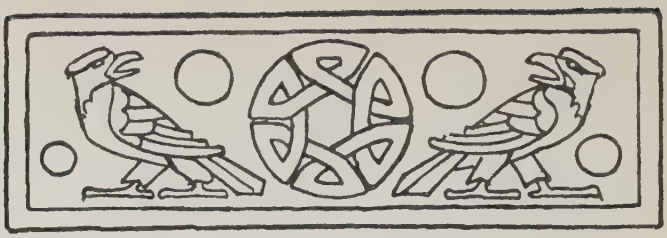
Fig. 23.

flying buttress of Gothic architecture, that it conflicts with the expectation that the building is secure. It may be true that " The arch never sleeps," but we do not agree that it is always slipping, and therefore object to a building which looks propped up. Flying buttresses have not necessarily the effect of being active props, and it is questionable whether the ordinary observer understands what their function is.

The tying together of the parts of a thing, although not structural, is consonant with the logic of the object, because the object is one —an indivisible unit.

The third way of stating the object's nature is by revealing the material, and the construction, and by using modes of treatment which are consonant with the material, and with the object's use.

The " Arts and Crafts " movement has been characterised by emphasis upon regard for material, and regard for rightness or appropriateness, of method and execution. These indicate the true craftsman spirit, which provides a link between the world of idea on the one hand and the world of hard necessity on the other.



CHAPTER 11

MODES OF DECORATION

DECORATION at its simplest consists of the combination of the simplest kind of æsthetic expression with an object. In the headpiece to Chapter 6 we gave an extremely simple form of æsthetic expression —a row of coloured squares ; but let us go as far as we can away from meaning, even from such simple geometrical forms as the square, and take shapeless masses as here in Fig. 24. These let us colour vermilion and crimson, alternately, or in any series of changes.

FIG. 24.

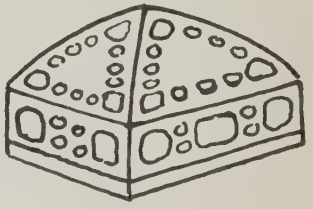


FIG. 25.

We will capitulate the several *modes* by which these simple melodic arrangements are combined with the object. These several modes apply throughout decoration, as well in the simplest as in the most complex cases. They are the modes or methods of combination of melody and object.

The *first mode* is to *treat the edge*. Obviously the object may be defined by its edges. To distribute the colour along the edges cannot fail to effect union. The colour must be distributed evenly, for inequality will suggest, and is demanded by a change of circumstances, producing a different value in one part of the edge to another.

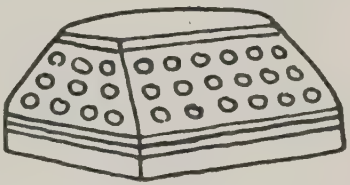


Fig. 26.

The *second mode* is similar to the first. It recognises the object's *surfaces*. If the same form is distributed evenly over an area it suggests that the area is alike in all those places where it occurs.

The *third mode* is the extremely important one of the *imposition of units*. If an area of any shape is taken (as a torn piece of paper), and upon it a movable unit, as a coin, is laid, and is moved about, there will ultimately be found a position where the unit comes to rest. It is lodged upon a spot from which the eye will not permit it to be moved. For the eye has judged all the edges, and has balanced them against one another, and has found a point sympathetic to all.

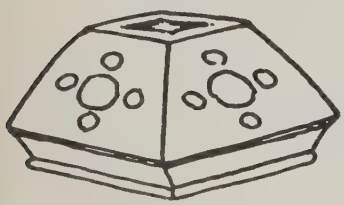


Fig. 27.

The imposition of the unit fixes the shape of

the area beyond alteration. Though the position for the unit will sometimes be the middle of the area it must not be assumed that the middle is the correct spot. The eye must judge.

Fig. 28.

It will be realised that when a form is imposed spaces are created all round it. These spaces similarly may receive imposed units. The head-piece to this chapter illustrates this.

It is imposition of the unit which decides the position of the berry in Fig. 28. *C* is right, *D* is wrong.

The *fourth mode*, and an equally important one, is the *division of the area* into harmoniously related parts. If this is achieved the eye will not permit alteration—for harmony is immutable.

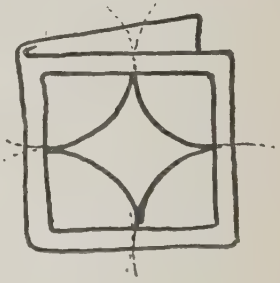


Fig. 29.

The *fifth mode* is division by the *wandering line*. This is the basis of the scroll. The wandering line meanders over the surface, always, as it were, keeping at the same distance from itself. In its wanderings it cuts the surface up into similar and proportionate parts. Valuable and universal as the mode is, it is

not as kindly to the decorator as it appears to be. For it leads him to neglect mass, and the ease with which it can be used gives him too much practice with curves and gets him into the

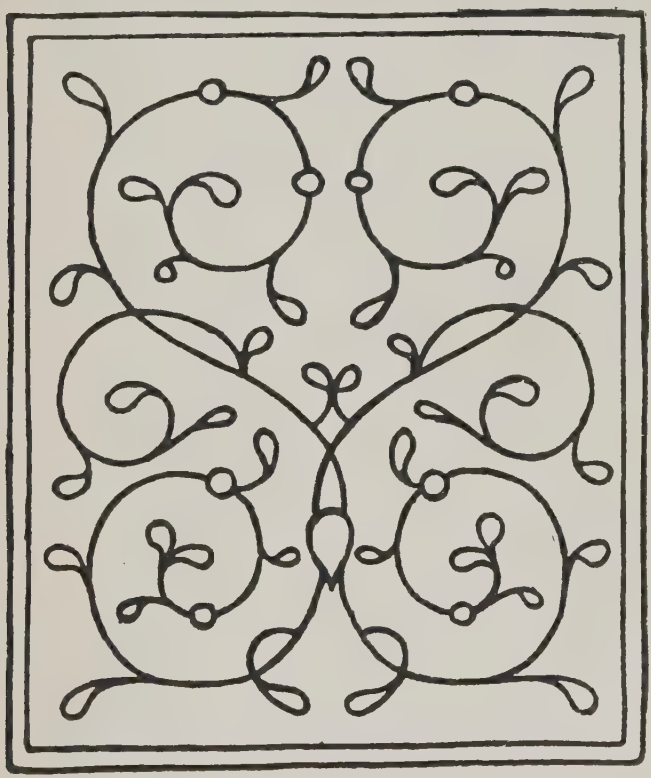
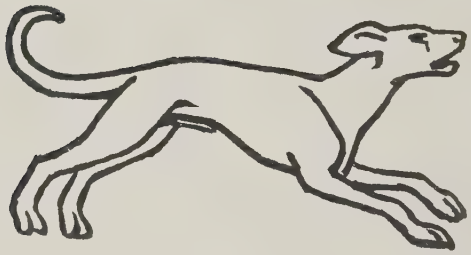


Fig. 30.

habit of relying upon suavity as the basis of composition.

The five modes are commonly in operation together. They proceed from different mental impulses, but nevertheless derive support from

one another, and often reach the same result by different means, as for example Fig. 29 might be said to be an imposition of a unit as well as a division of the area. But consideration shows that the mind is acting differently in the two cases.



CHAPTER 12

DIVISION AND ADDITION

We have described how the five modes of distribution fulfil their function. We have shown the logical basis by which each effects the combination of the decoration with the object. These explanations have not, however, taken note of the two opposite ways in which the determination to form, and place, the different units of the decoration, proceeds in the mind, and under the hand. These two ways are division and addition. They are two ways of reaching *entity*, or the complete organic whole.

To be an entity, that is, to have such organic completeness that all the parts seem to belong to one another, and nothing can be taken away nor added, there must be a certain degree of complexity and of multiplicity of parts. And the mutual agreement amongst these parts must extend from the least to the greatest. This is the *theme* which runs throughout, and it may be said to extend even beyond the least into a range of

imaginary lesser parts, and beyond the greatest into a range of imaginary still greater parts. Thus

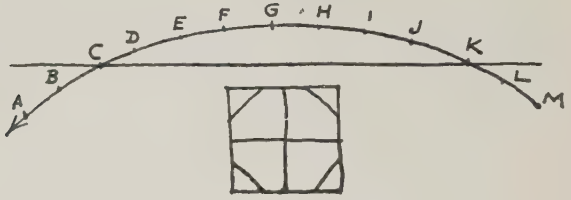


Fig. 31.

we may say of a *theme* that it is infinite, but that a certain amount of it emerges from the sea of unconsciousness.

Let *AM* (Fig. 31) be a theme, and assume that part *G* of it emerges, that is, is given expression to, in, let us say, a square. The problem is to develop upon the square something which will begin the revelation of the theme, that is, to expose *F* and *H*. Let us cut off the corners, and say that is *F*, and draw cross-diameters, and call that *H*. The part *FGH* of the theme has now emerged. We continue these elaborations until the melody is complete. This is when the range emerges to the extent *CK*, but we must always suppose a

Fig. 32.

melody can extend further, both ways, although we seem to have found the ends of it.

For putting the parts of the melody together, and reaching that degree of completeness when the theme is exposed and entity has been reached, there are, as we have said, two ways of proceeding. The one is by beginning with a mass, and dividing it, the other is by beginning with a central spot, or a line, and accumulating forms around it or upon it. To the first—division—the second is generally added, as in the headpiece to this chapter, where certain masses are first placed, and then divided by wandering lines upon them, and then other wandering lines are added, which extend and connect the masses. Additions to masses again are seen in Figs. 32, 33 and 34.

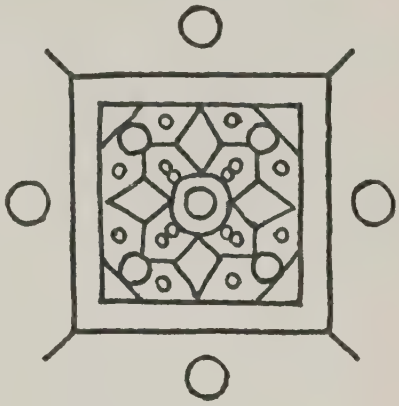


FIG. 33.

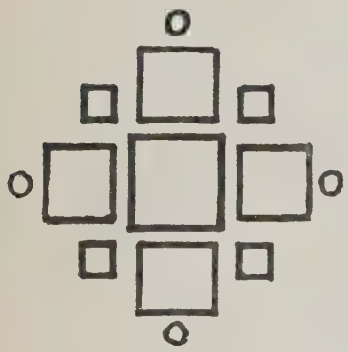


FIG. 34.

There is no need further to discuss these two

ways. The designer will find that his mind is working differently in each. He will find, too, that the process of division is the one which he less readily adopts. This is because interest in subject-matter fastens the attention upon the items separately, and favours the process of accumulation. But the process of division, because it compels the adoption of mass, is the more likely to lead to satisfactory decorative results.

CHAPTER 13

EXAMPLES OF THE MODES

We give on the following pages some examples of the modes in operation. The operations of division and addition are evident, as is also the value of proportion. The energy of the oblique line is seen in Figs. 35 and 37. Fig. 42 is firm and

Fig. 35.

quiet. Fig. 43 is designed upon it, but the framing lines are omitted, subject is introduced, and a degree of bold freedom is expressed by letting the forms overrun the panels and escape from their rigidity. Such a pattern as Fig. 41 is better with a background darker than the forms.

Note that the imposed unit in Fig. 38 makes the form unchangeable, whereas the absence of such a unit from Fig. 36 permits the square

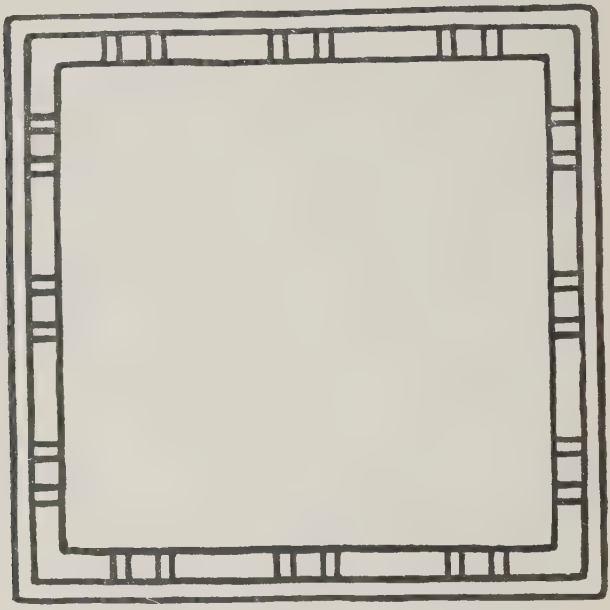


Fig. 36.

being made oblong. The edge-border has not sufficient power there to render the shape unchangeable.

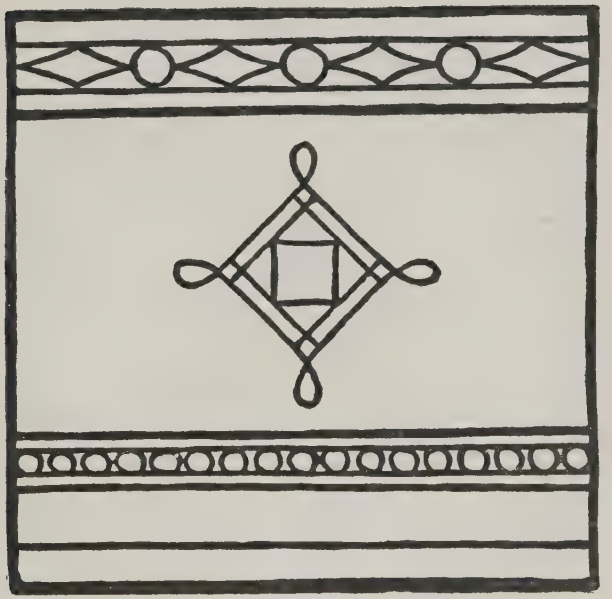


Fig. 37.

Fig. 38.

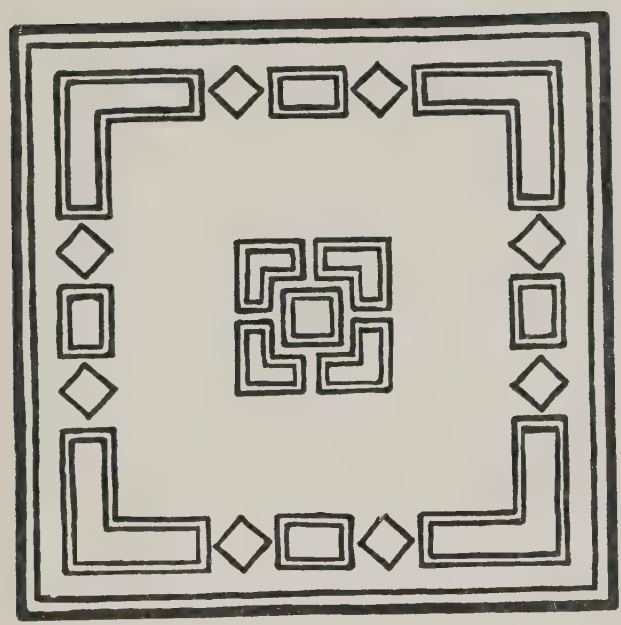


Fig. 39.

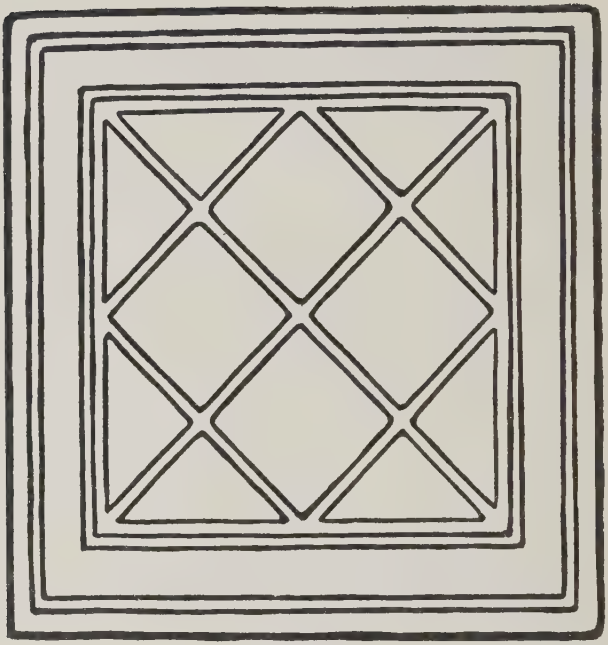


Fig. 40.

Fig. 41.

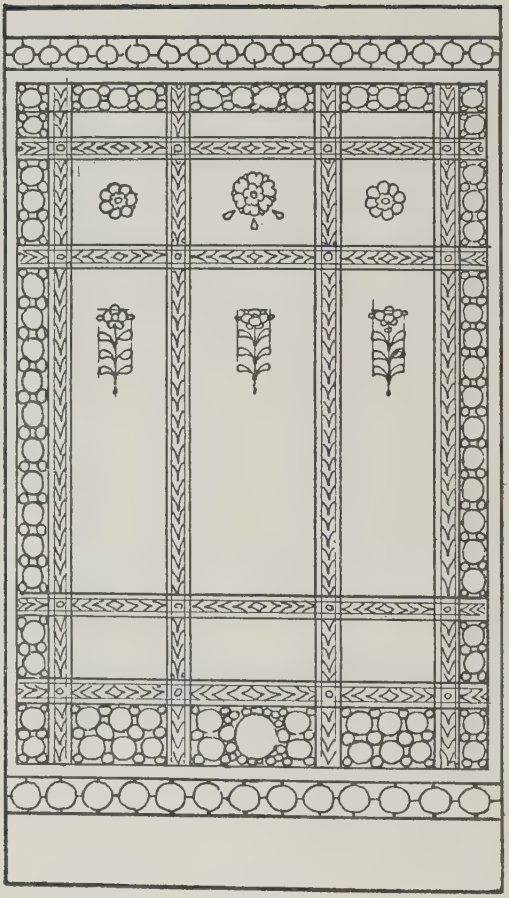


Fig. 42.

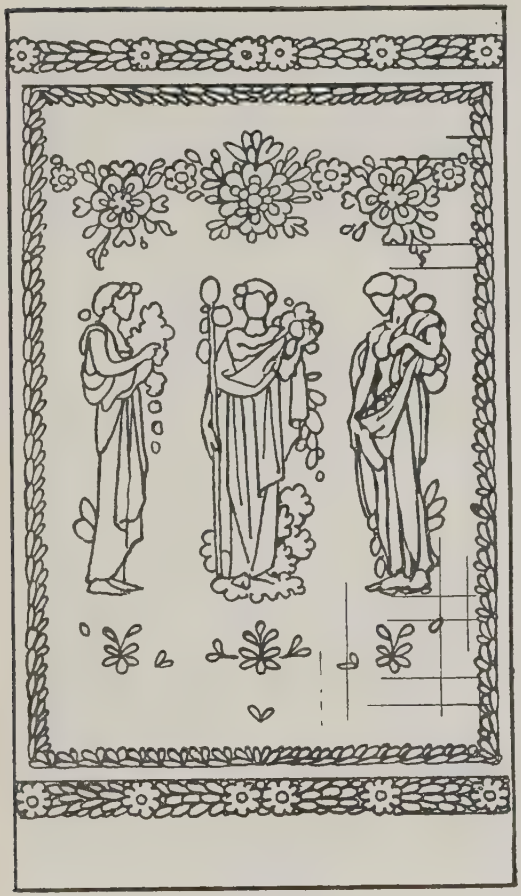


Fig. 43.

Fig. 44.

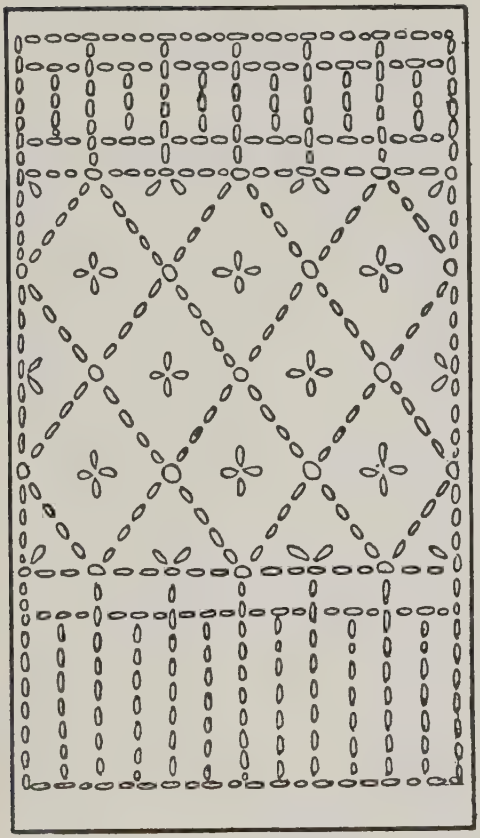


Fig. 45.

CHAPTER 14

EMOTIONAL EFFECT

If the simplest decoration is a combination of *æsthetic effect* (that is, beauty without reason, or relation to events or natural facts) with an object of use, it may be argued that this, the simplest, is also all-sufficient. And the claim might go so far as to demand that not even the concreteness of geometrical forms is necessary ; or even further, that as an emotional effect can be obtained by plain forms no decoration at all is needed. It would be interesting to see a British Museum, or a Victoria and Albert Museum, in which no specimen whatever bore decoration ; where the melodies were solely of appropriate form and natural colour of material. The interest would lie in seeing how near to a permanently satisfactory result the useful arts could get without appealing to the intellectual value of geometricality, or the poetic value of reality.

What would perhaps prevent success, and what has perhaps compelled the use from all time of decoration upon useful things, is *duration*—the fact that the object must continue to exist. It must be seen day in, day out, and some means

must be found to prevent it becoming wearisome. This has been found in *subject*.

The deficiency which would be found in plain work would be found also in the purely emotional. If it is *duration* which makes purely emotional art unsatisfying the only places where such an art can exist are (*a*) where there is a good deal of subject and intellectuality near to it; and (*b*) where it is seen casually and for a short time; and (*c*) where the object is in movement.

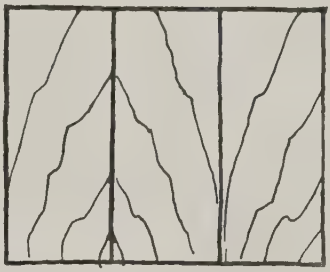


Fig. 46.

The first case is illustrated by the use of figured marbles and woods. They are generally found in association with the lines of architecture. These are usually severe and cannot escape symmetry of some sort, and symmetry is cogent, not emotional. The marbles upon the walls of St. Mark's, at Venice, are arranged, so as to produce a symmetrical statement, and there are pictures in mosaic all about, and delicate carvings of a representative kind.

The second case is well illustrated in the marbled end-papers of book-bindings. Laurence Sterne, who was artist and musician, as well as man of letters and parson, whimsically introduced a marbled page (two to be exact,

pp. 169 and 170 of Vol. III., of the first edition) into *Tristram Shandy*.

" Read, read, read, read, my beloved reader ! read—or by the knowledge of the great saint *Paraleipomenon*—I tell you beforehand, you had better throw down the book at once ; for without *much reading*, by which your reverence knows, I mean *much knowledge*, you will no more be able to penetrate the moral of the next marbled page (motly emblem of my work !) than the world with all its sagacity has been able to unraval the many opinions, transactions and truths which still lie mystically hid under the dark veil of the black one."

Fig. 47.

It is interesting to note that STERNE chose yellow, green, pink and white as the colours to symbolise his " motly work." The effect is lightsome and pleasant. His remark that the opinions, etc., " still lie hid " under the " dark veil of the black one " (again two, pp. 73 and 74 in Vol. I.), became increasingly appropriate as time went on, for in the first half of the Nineteenth Century the black page became a sort of monumental tablet, with ALAS POOR YORICK upon it or, like the marbled one, was omitted alto-

gether. What the printers and editors overlooked was that the mass of black in the one case, and of marbling in the other, was of the same shape and size as the block of type on the ordinary pages of the book. They were equally pages to be read. They were expressions of emotion when words failed—when cogent ideas no longer served.

The student will find these chaotic marbled patterns are by no means as easy to make as they look. There is balance and proportion in them, and a certain equality of distribution. Those of the Eighteenth Century are the best. Those stirred with a stick, or with a comb, are much less expressive than those in which the globules of colour make the forms alone, by crowding against one another.

Fig. 48.

The usefulness of the marbled pattern as an end-paper lies very largely in its ready adaptability to the area. As it has no " way up " it has only to be tastefully, not exactly, placed. Moreover having no obvious mean-

ing it does not conflict with the contents of the book.

The third case is that of movement, and other conditions which prevent constant observation. Hence formless patterns, and patterns made up of a jumble of forms to which no one pays any attention, are nowadays used for ladies' dress materials. The ladies of the Renaissance, frolicsome as they were, liked patterns with the intellectuality of geometrical or semi-geometrical form and construction. The ladies of to-day are revelling in vitality, and avoid the intellectual. Their patronage in art, music, everything, is towards the irresponsibilities of "jazz" —which, after all, is a sort of orderly chaos, and a chaos with a dominant emotional mood.

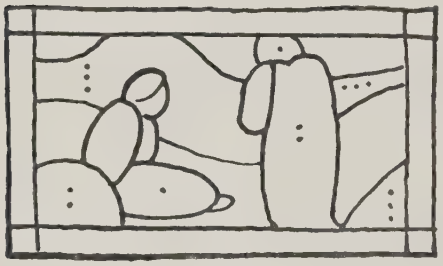
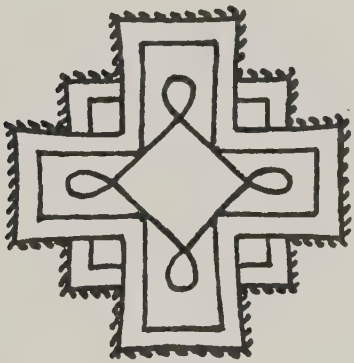
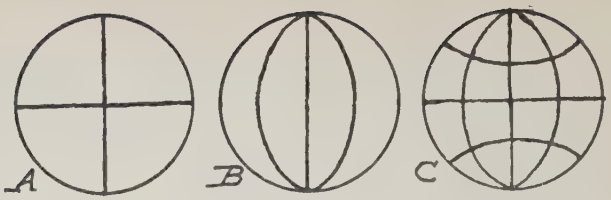


Fig. 49.

Finally, we must acknowledge that what appears only as senseless chaos when no features are evident, becomes established as *balance* when articular form is added. Thus, Fig. 48 is an arrangement of units imposed in a disorderly but balanced manner. It is really a marbled pattern developed into representation. And a decorative figure-composition is at base a disorderly but

balanced division of the area—by the fourth mode mentioned in Chapter 11. (Colour the patches marked with one dot red, with two dots blue, with three dots green ; the rest, and the border, leave white.)





CHAPTER 15

CLEARNESS

THE economy of art is the determination of the due assertiveness of each stroke for its service in the expression. Every patch must have shape, size, position, colour, intensity, according to its place in the statement, whether the statement is of idea, as " house," or is of effect, as a melody of blue and gold.

Every note must be clear, but it may be faint or it may be loud.

If the subject of the work is two geometrical units, it is obvious that if we want the mind to receive them in a cogent manner we shall arrange them as in *A* (Fig. 50), and shall avoid any such confused arrangement as *B*. According as we paint the arrangement *A* in pale or in strong tints so will its statement be faint or loud. The louder the statement the more cogent we may consider it.

We might perhaps arrange works of art in a series progressing from those which demand the greatest cogency to those which demand the least. By cogency we mean such clarity that he who runs may read. The least cogent art we

should expect to find amongst drawings, etchings, or paintings which are to be kept in a portfolio, and brooded over. In those works which we regard as the least cogent, there is not, as our statement might imply, vagueness, uncertainty, or confusion, but such a management of the forms, that, clear as they all separately may be, they are presented in a way which does not immediately yield the full meaning. Perhaps the

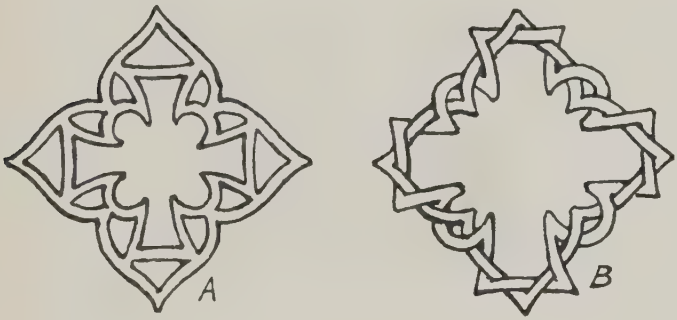


Fig. 50.

technical reason for this *retardation of expression* is that the forms which first catch the eye are not the demonstrative forms by which the essence of the subject is conveyed. It might even be claimed that pictorial art of this kind should not disclose its deepest meaning at the first glance. As instances, we might mention Rembrandt's etching, *The Death of the Virgin*, and in the decorative arts those Greek vases which have a white ground and figures painted in tender red line.

At the other extreme come the works in which an immediate disclosure seems to be essential. In that case what is first seen and what always claims attention must declare the essence of the subject.

The silhouette is the method for the most demonstrative exposition. The subject is taken in its most expressive attitude, for the silhouette is not

Fig. 51.

merely *any* outline filled in with black. It must be expressive both of form and action. Among the most notable instances of the use of the silhouette are the black-figured Greek vase-paintings. The forcefulness of the method adds to the feeling of reality. Deficiency in expression and truthfulness is somewhat made up for by this treatment.

Silhouettes in decoration are often overlaid with a secondary expression, perhaps in white

line. These secondary expressions, although they are in lines, have, and should have, the same clarity as the silhouette itself. Such a secondary expression is illustrated in Fig. 51.

Let it be observed that this secondary expression necessarily does not disclose itself immediately, as the silhouette does. Herein is a sort of retardation. As works of decorative art pass in our imaginary series from the immediately demonstrative to those which demand more sustained attention, these additional expressions increase. All movable articles tend to belong to the immediately demonstrative, wall decorations to the other kind.

Fig. 52.

When clarity is at its maximum the silhouette is surrounded by a ground which will show it up. We may describe the procedure thus—that a projecting *angle* of the form is brought against the *side* of an adjacent one, and the long side of a form is made to span the mouth of a gulf in an adjacent form. This method produces *open distribution*. The simplest way of reducing assertiveness is by *close distribution*. In this one form fits into another. In some of the early Greek vases, with

black patterns, there is a mass made to fit between two adjacent forms, and deriving its form from them. It is therefore meaningless. In close distribution the forms are separated by a channel, and one may proceed therefore by drawing a margin around a form to keep its neighbour away. There come thus to be intermediate spaces between the more important forms and these spaces have to be filled. In some early Greek vases they are filled with circular forms, rosettes, large and small, as the necessities of the case demand.

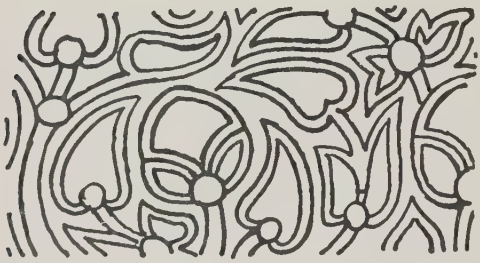


Fig. 53.

Open distribution is illustrated in Fig. 52, close distribution in Fig. 53.

Clearness leads to a quality which may be called *structure*. It is that arrangement in which lines seem to support one another, somewhat as structures in wrought iron do. Of the forms in the headpiece to this chapter we regard *A* and *C* as right, *B* as wrong. Sometimes it seems as if we prefer arrangements which appear able to withstand pressure from all sides; and there may be an æsthetic predilection which demands that a form shall appear to have structural

strength, equal to, or greater than, the piece of material which it seems to displace—as if we said to ourselves of a material, that, although not revealed by any form in itself, its strength is

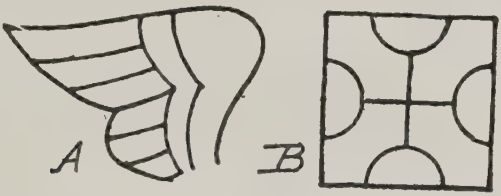


Fig. 54.

represented by such and such a kind of meshing, or organic structure, and therefore, that any form imposed upon it as decoration must exhibit the same features of strength (Fig. 54).

Crowding is an offence against clearness, and apparently against the very spirit of decoration.

CHAPTER 16

GEOMETRICAL INTELLECTUALITY

GEOMETRICAL form is something for the mind to engage itself with, and may therefore be ranked with objective ideas, though strictly speaking it does not belong to them. For geometrical form to have objective value it must reach a certain degree of complexity, because the mind

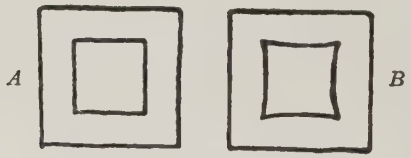


FIG. 55.

must be engrossed in noting a series of particulars for a sufficient length of time to produce a sense of the whole being organic. A simple instance of this complexity is afforded in Fig. 55. Here *A* is so simple as to be almost immediately exhausted by the mind. The eye connects the corners of the two squares; otherwise it has practically nothing to do. But if the sides of one

of the squares are curved, *B*, the attention of the eye is held very much longer.

A geometrical form must always be so elaborate, and yet so homogeneous, and therefore simple, that the quality of an *entity* is produced. An entity is that to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing may be taken away, and

Fig. 56.

is something like the skeleton of an organic thing, which awaits the touch of life.

Fig. 62 is an all-over spot-pattern of meaningless forms which are relatively shapeless. Its effect lies in the proportion of its spots to their distance apart. Each group of five spots is an entity, but by itself is rather of too low importance to be regarded as such. An assemblage of several of them produces somewhat the effect of entity.

Fig. 63 is a similar pattern in geometrical forms. With it the mental grip is surer.

We should notice here that if we continue to extend a geometrical design by repetitions we ultimately reach a stage where the satisfaction of entity is lost. If a unit which is thus repeated has

Fig. 57.

itself the value of entity it loses this quality—perhaps at once. It would seem therefore that of a repeating pattern there should be just so much as permits the notion of entity to form in the mind, and no more. Hence the Greek fret is much more expressive in short lengths, than in long ones. The same is true of a chess-board

pattern. The chess-board itself is beyond the stage of melody. It has too many squares. Decorative geometrical forms are organic, not mathematical, combinations of lines. Their purpose is to express cogent vitality. Whether, therefore, the lines should be straight, the angles

Fig. 58.

equal, or the shapes exact, depends entirely upon the needs of the case.

To say that geometrical forms in decoration have no connection with the mental exercises of mathematical science would be to overstate the case, for such mental pleasure may take its place in subject, just as natural significance and dramatic story do, but, like them, it must submit to melodic form. This it cannot always do.

The genius of decoration seems peculiarly opposed to solid geometrical forms being used as details. Solid geometrical forms appear in carved decorations of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries. They are small in size and oft re-

Fig. 59.

peated, but although their chief value lies in their contribution to a glittering or shimmering effect, it seems that interest was taken in their mathematical qualities.

The rising desire in the Thirteenth Century to see solid embodiments of ideas, or illusional representations of them, led to the frequent

Fig. 60.

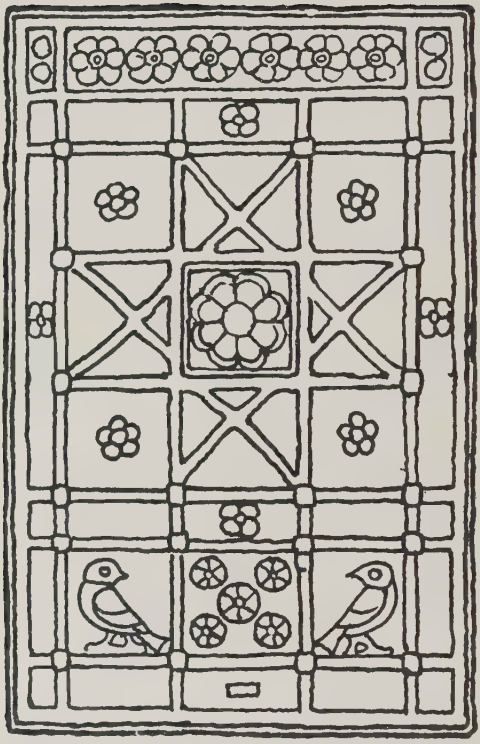


Fig. 61.

introduction of patterns which seem to be recessed, as Fig. 64. When such patterns were shaded, as they generally were, with bright arbitrary colours, the stupidity of the ideas became hidden. For of course a solid geometrical form is really stupid—a solidified notion is an affront to the intelligence.

It was perhaps for this reason that when,

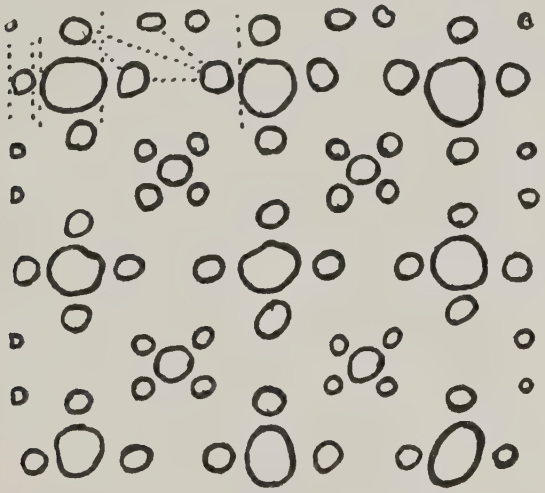


Fig. 62.

towards the end of the Sixteenth Century, solid geometrical forms appeared again in decoration —no doubt because mathematical studies had for some time been earnestly taken up—they entered upon only a short life. Facetted forms like precious stones, tetrahedrons and other conceptions of the three-dimensional condition, are common in Elizabethan and Jacobean decoration.

But if these solidifications of purely mathematical ideas stayed for but a short time, the Renaissance yielded a permanent product of a somewhat similar kind in the cartouche-work, of which Fig. 67 may serve as an example. This has

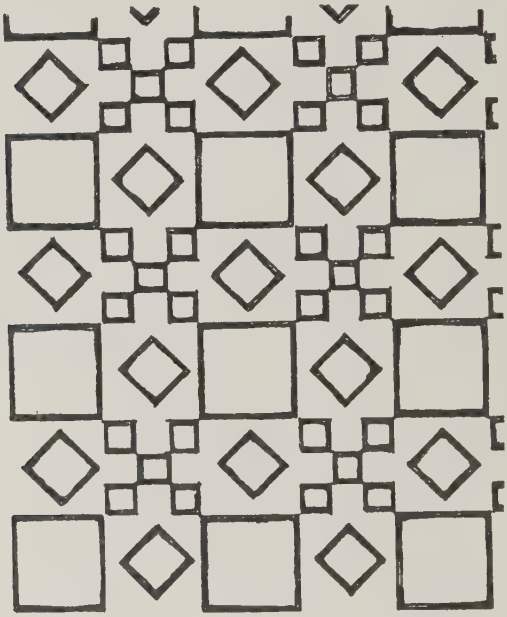


Fig. 63.

no mathematical notion to be faithful to, and twists and turns in any way so long only as it can exhibit a rational grouping of masses and surfaces, and produce beautiful lines and shapes.

Interlacing, which from time immemorial has had a place in decoration, is a mild form of the same sort of thing. It perhaps gives a sense of

reality without pretending that the forms which interlace are real. Perhaps it is because in *B* (Fig. 65) the separation of the forms makes them

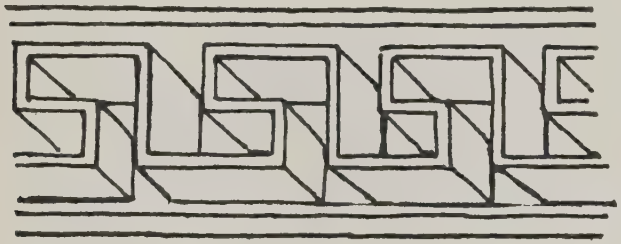


Fig. 64.

appear real, that such an arrangement is not accepted in decoration.

Interlaced forms have about them a suggestion

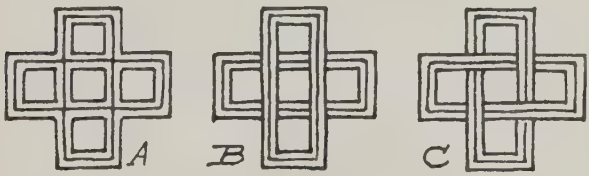


Fig. 65.

of nature. By interlacing a considerable variation of dimensions is introduced—compare *A* and *C* (Fig. 65.) Shading is, as a rule, not advantageous. We have already noted in Chapter 6 that the inner thongs are sometimes narrower.

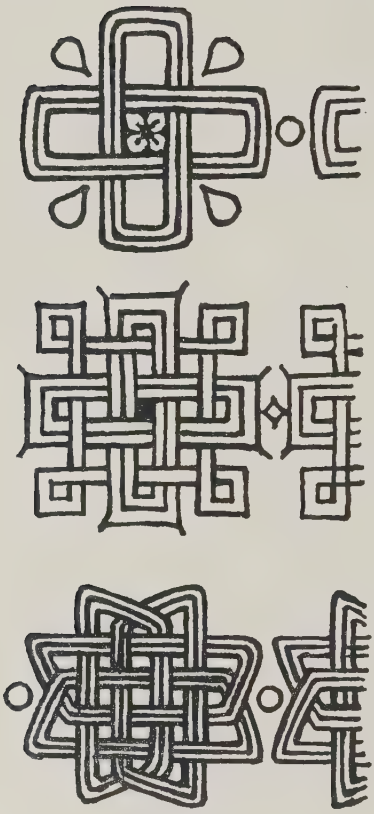


Fig. 66.

Fig. 67.

CHAPTER 17

BRAID PATTERNS

No technical process of design gives such constantly good results as the use of the *braid*. A braid is a broad line composed of a central mass, in which there is a succession of forms, flanked by

Fig. 68.

a border on either side. The pattern is commenced with a single line which wanders about or forms partitions, and is then widened. Care has of course to be taken that the small spaces, or loops, made by the original line are not so small as to

choke up when the widening is done. Almost any scribble can thus be turned into a good pattern, as in Fig. 70.

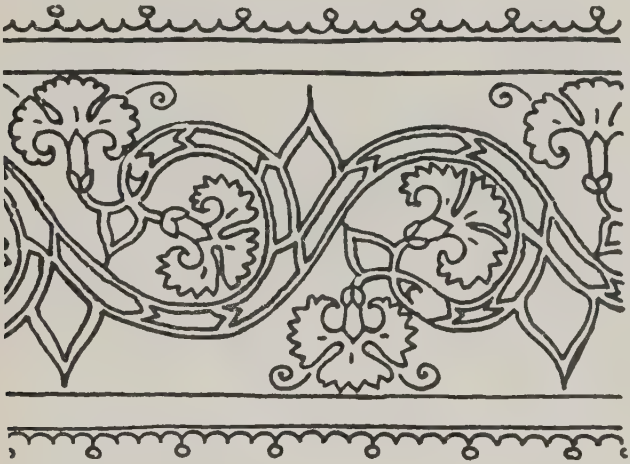


Fig. 69.

Fig. 70.

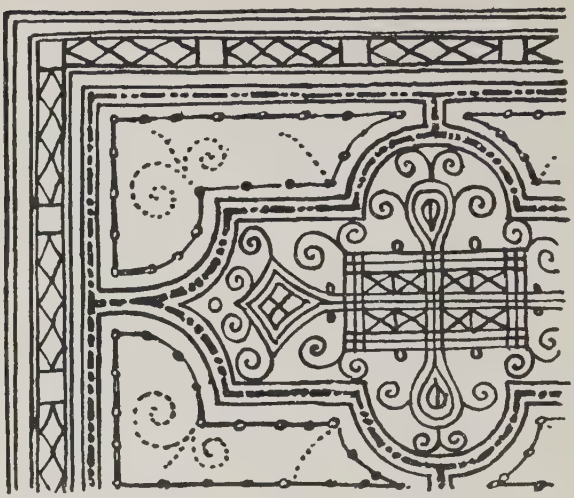


Fig. 71.

CHAPTER 18

REAL FORMS

It is unfortunate that ornamental art has beggared the representation of real things in decoration. This has come about through all forms having to possess æsthetic quality, for if this quality must be present why not begin with it, and let the quality of identity go? It may be argued, too, that nothing is so important as vivacity, and that therefore it matters not what forms are, so long as the effect is vivacious. This is, however, getting dangerously near the heresy of the Baroque, which was that art must be surprising and vivacious.

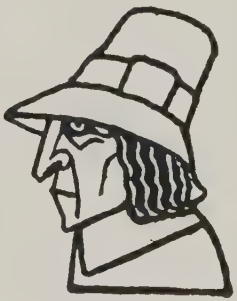


Fig. 72.

The wideness of the scope of the decorator's art favours confusion in principles. The art extends from broad mural paintings which are complete in themselves, and are visible all at once,

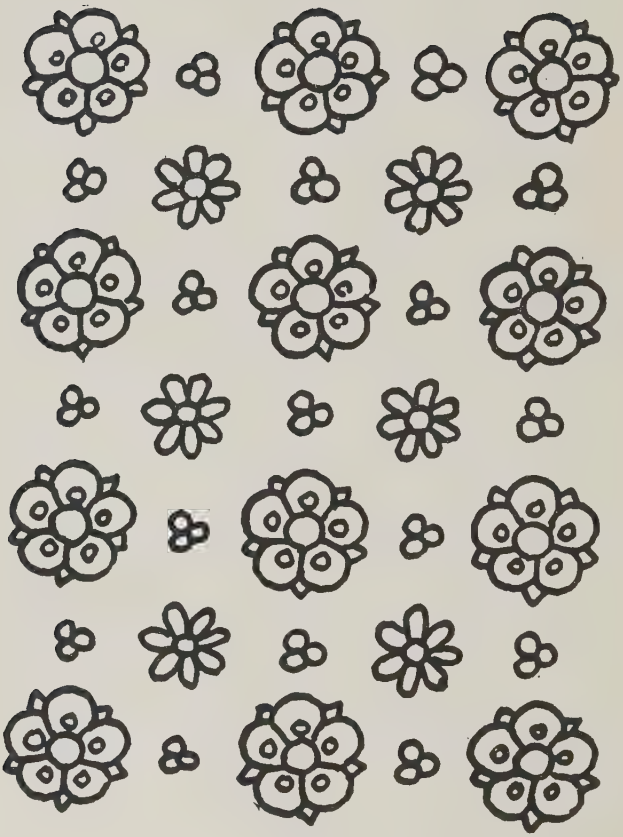


Fig. 73.

and in which a single idea can be dealt with without interruption, to the relatively trivial details of a thing which cannot be seen completely at one time, and which is constantly being moved. It is easy in this second case for the decoration to lose importance, so far as subject-

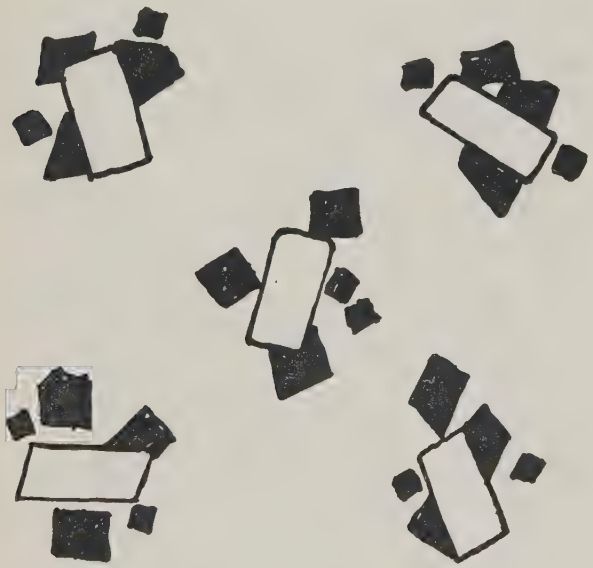


Fig. 74.

matter is concerned. But it should not. Even when the decoration of an object cannot be seen all at once, as in the case of an object with several sides, the subjects on the sides may form a consecutive series. Indeed, there is peculiar charm in such a condition, whether we take the object in our hand and turn it about, or have to move

round it. The succession is something like the scenes of a play, or the stanzas of a poem. But often a story, or theme, is not permitted to the decorator. Nevertheless he may hold the mirror up to nature, if only in a House-that-Jack-built fashion, picturing, one after another, the separate

Fig. 75.

common things of our experience. Every one of the elements in his trivial arabesque (an arabesque is an array of images having no relationship in story) may be a true comment upon life and reality. His attitude of mind should be somewhat that of the following extract from a book already quoted :—

" What eie can rest satisfied in beholding the variety of the formes, and colours of the rainbow, the great riches of the spring, which in all things, in all places, even the most solitary, in holes, in caves, upon high hills, the craggy rock, hollow mountains, desert corneis, and in all other places most remote, and abandoned, displayeth the majesty of her mother *Venus?* Who is not astonished to behold the rich garments of the beasts of the field, and the birds of the ayre, rich in their proud

Fig. 76.

mantles, their glorious maynes, their beautiful backes, their soft feathers, their comely spottes, their glittering wings? Who wondereth not at the hair of the Lyon, the spotted garment of the Panther, the excellent feature of the Horse, the back of the Leopard, the no less delightful than alluring skin of some little Dogges, which furnished with a thousand strange delights, attend us every hour in our houses? Who can sufficiently display the beauty of the Cock, the rich tayle of the Peacocke, the innumerable colours of the Pigeon, the glorious feathers of the Fesant? Who can describe

the silver scales of the fish, their slippery backes, their ruddy and hyacinthian colours, their divers purflings, in manner of little drops of gold, their formes, their barbes, their armes, and their innumerable fashions ? Who can by speech sufficiently set down the whiteness of the Lilly, the rednesse of the Rose, the purple of the Violet, and the multitude of those excellent beauties which we behold with singular delight and admiration

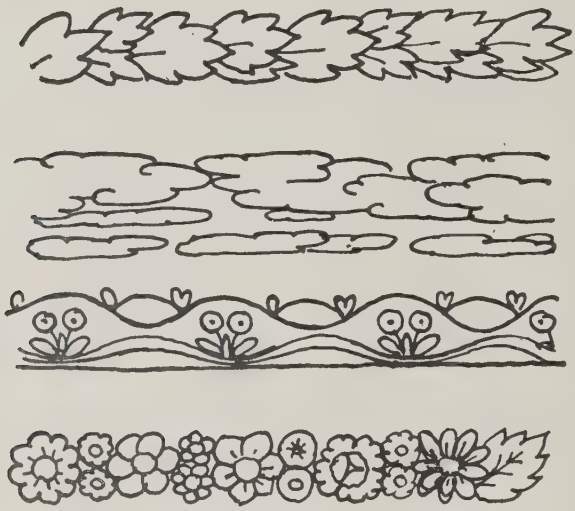


Fig. 77.

in every flower ? Who can describe the colours of the Apple, his red and white, and yellow, and medley of all colours, the forme sphericall, oval, piramidall thereof, with a thousand other wonders which upon their plants we see in them ? Who is so wise as by his speech to adde beauty to the beauty of the plants, to their barkes, their spreading boughs, to the delicateness of their leaves, the diversity of their flowers, the magnificence of their fruite, the beauty of their toppes, and the diversity of their kindes . . ."—*Problems of*

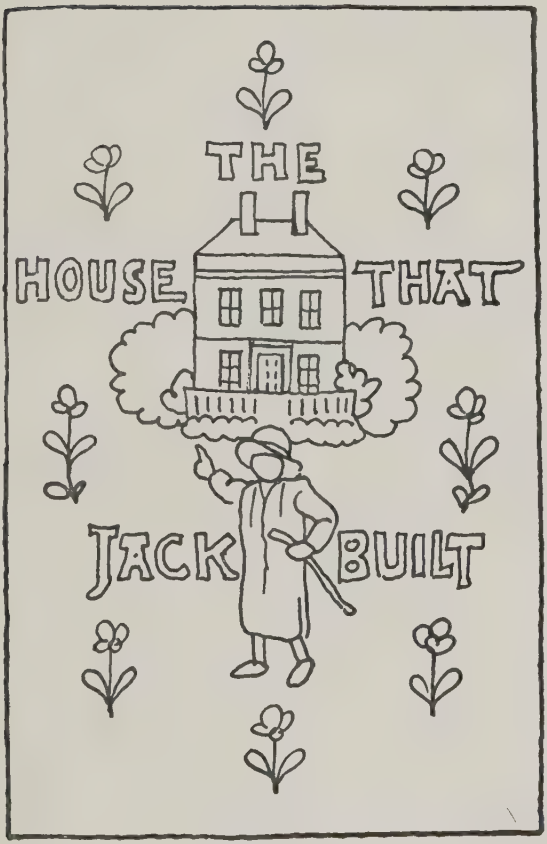


Fig. 78.

Beautie, written in Italian by Tho : Buoni. Translated into English by S. L[ennard]. Gent. At LONDON. 1606.

It is with such an eye for the beauty and the interesting character of real things that the decorator should approach his subject-matter. Let him take interest in people as human beings, who act in a way men do act. The long *duration* of a work of decoration—its being so constantly seen—makes the most serious actions the most appro-

FIG. 79.

priate. Perhaps the best decoration in the world is that upon GIOTTO's Campanile at Florence, with the hexagonal panels holding the most human of sculpture—by GIOTTO himself, PISANO, LUCA DELLA ROBBIA, and LORENZO GHIBERTI—with a little below, a band of geometrical inlay. (See Plate III.)

Nevertheless, it is wise perhaps to begin with a touch of humour to prevent our becoming sententious, for nothing has done so much harm in decoration as pomposity (Fig. 72).

" To Banbury came I, Oh ! profane One !
Where I met a Puritane One
Hanging of his Cat on Monday
For killing of a Mouse on Sunday."

RICHARD BRATHWAITE'S *Drunken Barnaby's Four Itineraries to the North of England.* A.D. 1638.

Let us recognise that our decoration can be *wholly* made up of images—pictures—of real things. If we want a band we can have a row of leaves, or of flowers, or of clouds. If we want upstanding lines we can have trees, and buildings and people. Why should not the patches of colour in the examples in Chapter 11 be turned into real things. Fig. 62 is a pattern of blots. In Fig. 73 we have turned it into flowers, and why should we not turn Fig. 74 into witches and cats, as in Fig. 75.

CHAPTER 19

REALISM

THE essence of realism is not so much to give tangible embodiment to images as to show them involved in the whole body of nature. To give them tangible embodiment may better be called *objectivism*. Realism to a certain extent hides facts of corporeal existence. Valuing the presence of nature in its oneness—a oneness in which he himself is included—above all other facts, the realist is little concerned with what the subjects are which help him to reveal this presence. And, indeed, since the union of all things is proclaimed in his realism, he has little cause to pick and choose. Sometimes, perversely, he chooses what others despise, the better to declare his principle. Nevertheless, when any ethical purpose is served thereby, he treats this or that subject, yet always remembering that greater than every subject is this revelation of unity in reality.

When his work is in the completest pictorial form—as, say, in the paintings of JAN VERMEER

of Delft, the realist makes no attempt to reveal himself by comment, emphasis or selection. It is a complete full statement, apparently unemotional, apparently purposeless. For the realist regards art as social, that is to say, as based upon whatever understanding is common amongst men. Many and many are the themes hidden within the work, but the observer will find them, for the language is the language common to thoughtful men.

But though it is in the picture that realism makes the completest revelation, it is not confined to elaborate statement. For though the realist does not select in the sense of choosing only what fits in with some notion, but takes nature as he finds it, he may choose which statement he presents of the many he may make, and if he thus lifts out one statement from the vivid body of reality, he is forced to abandon fullness of expression and to reveal his subject by selected touches. Thus the sketch is realistic though it is not a comprehensive disclosure.

The most important characteristic of realism is *projection in space*. This is not so much the projection forward of a particular subject from amongst the rest, as the merging in and emergence from the general whole of all the things that constitute it.

In Chapter 32, where we speak of *depth*, we refer to what we there call the natural means of

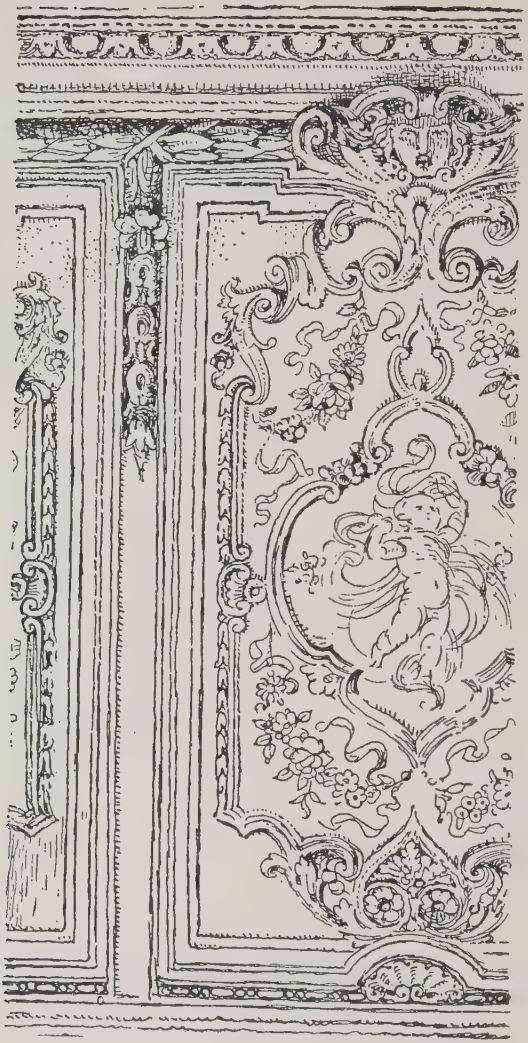


Fig. 80.

expressing depth. To them must be added the ordinary means of imitative realism. Of these, we will here mention one as an example—the melting away, or paleness, of the shadow side of a form. We see this expression of realism in ancient Roman wall paintings and in decorations of the Eighteenth Century. In both a tender quietness is observed which adds greatly to the sense of space. A primitive means of spatial expression is the dark silhouettes of paintings in ancient tombs and caves. These unmistakably " stand out." The black silhouettes of the " black-figure " Greek vases are probably realistic in intention, though to us they are now very conventional.

Fig. 80 illustrates the kind of decoration which the Eighteenth Century produced. The modelled character of the architecture descends into curved mouldings which form scrolls surrounding and leading into the panels, which are themselves treated with some measure of depth. The whole is therefore suffused with a sense of fluidity—impalpable as the atmosphere. English people have never quite managed to feel at home with this treatment. Less logical as they are supposed to be than the French they value more the evidences of reality. This style they regard as artificial; fit chiefly for the theatre, the casino and temporary show places.

CHAPTER 20

OBJECTIVISM

OBJECTIVISM is statement of what a thing is—not what it appears to be, nor what we think it is. The purpose of the statement is to give information. It does this by exhibiting a tangible embodiment of the subject. Ordinarily an objectivist is called a realist, but he adopts much more the mood of the schoolmaster. RUBENS, like a newspaper, tells you everything, and tells it without remorse. But the most schoolmasterly of realists were our pre-Raphaelites, of whom HOLMAN HUNT was the worst flogger. Fact upon fact is thrown into the eye without mercy. HUNT keeps on telling you. It is interesting that modern decoration owes more to the Impressionists than to its own practitioners. They were out against the schoolmaster attitude of their predecessors—HOLMAN HUNT, MEISSONIER, and all the rest. They proclaimed the gospel of *the innocent eye*—the eye which does not pretend to know what everything is in a scene.

The gospel of not knowing what things are amounts to a rejection of subject in any more tangible form than general sentiment. The mind

thus relieved of subject moves over to the melody. Hence, the impressionistic method developed into a quest of balance and of harmonic beauty. This soon led to the conscious melodic distribution of colour and tone, which sanctioned some measure of falsification of natural effect in favour of melodic quality. The impressionistic pictures became decorative—they looked well upon the wall. This movement of painting towards decorative effect limited the selection of true aspects which were deemed suitable for decoration to a narrow range. Evening effects, misty effects, and the view to the East, when the setting sun illuminates things with an orange light, became popular with artists who made it their first concern to hunt about for undiscovered realistic effects which had decorative quality.

Objectivism relies upon clear shapes, firm outlines, cogent shading, and the obliteration of nothing. The half-shaded kind of decoration which prevailed in the Sixteenth Century, and which we describe in Chapter 29 as being in the manner of RAPHAEL, was distinctly objective. But we must note that often the different parts were brightly coloured. This bright colouring overspread the objective statement with a subjective veil of emotion.

CHAPTER 21

INDICATIVE REPRESENTATION

It would have surprised King Louis the Fourteenth that any one should so far lose his wits as to be able to tolerate any representation which was not in the most cogent and objective terms. The decorative art of his day is oppressively objective—to us. The beholder is not allowed to think at all ; he is simply to be told.

But times have changed since the Seventeenth Century, and, if they had not, man is capable of a great deal more understanding than the schoolmasters give him credit for being.

If we go then to the opposite extreme we rely upon indication. We take our material and, doing the least possible to it, we arrange pieces of it so that they mean something. Thus, in Fig. 81, we arrange pools or lumps to look like a man and a horse. If the lumps are only of the colours grey and dull red, what shall we do ? Shall we make the horse all grey, and the man all red, or the other way about ; or shall we distribute the two colours as melodiously as we can, and as much in conformity with truth as we can ? The latter course has the advantage of uniting

the man and the horse in one group—some inconsistency in colouring is worth tolerating for that.

The great advantage of the indicative method over the realistic and objective methods—over the methods of imitative representation—is that it allows—

(1) The retention of the material in its pure or nearly pure state.
(2) Freedom of colouring.
(3) Simple and therefore powerful effect.

Fig. 81.

Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice* has an analysis of indicative representation which has a singularly modern ring. (See Vol. III., Chap. 4, *par.* xix.) He however speaks of the method as "symbolic," a term which is not strictly appropriate. For a symbol is properly unlike the thing it represents—as the winged ox is the symbol of St. Luke. Indicative representation is based

upon demonstration. It stirs imagination, but it directs the imagination to a particular subject, and through particular details of it. Experimenters in psychological expression have latterly favoured us with representations in *symbolic* terms—by forms which are not the forms of the things represented. Sometimes these forms are remotely derived or abstracted from the real forms. Most of our artists "have a shot" at this sort of expression. The experiments are symptomatic of an endeavour to get free from the shackles of objective art. Meanwhile the bearing of ethics upon the problem is wholly forgotten.

Fig. 82.

We return, then, to our consideration of indicative representation. After so simple a commencement, fact after fact may be added according as the circumstances permit longer inspection. Gradually therefore the representation approaches nearer to complete representation, so that it may be truly said that "finish is an added truth."

We give in the illustrations a few examples of very simple renderings—renderings which are

practically pools of colour proportioned and arranged to have the significance of real things.

If upon seeing a form the mind is reminded of some particular thing, as tree, dog, house, then that form represents that thing, and serves to promote recollection, and so to fill the mind with the notion of it, except in so far as the act of

Fig. 83.

imagination may be interrupted, or annulled, by some peculiarity in the form which belies the idea. To some people the colour green upon an image of a cow will prevent the notion " cow " developing.

A form is liable to two kinds of development, one, increase upon increase of statements contributive to the proper idea, and the other the

intrusion of alien elements tending to destroy it. The alien elements are sometimes mere corruptions and malformations, sometimes they intro-

Fig. 84.

duce pattern (as we shall see in Chapter 23, under *Degeneration*), but sometimes they produce a noble metamorphosis—as when a character in a fairy tale changes to some other sort of being.

CHAPTER 22

EXPRESSION

Up to the Sixteenth Century images of real things were always introduced because people were interested in them as subjects. Art was always pictorial in the sense of telling a story, or at least of representing persons and things to which some story was attached. There can be no doubt that this is the only ground upon which identifiable images may be introduced. And it is equally certain that the images must be as expressive as possible, for evidently, if we want the image of the dog because of the dog, we cannot be satisfied with an image which does not portray the character and the typical behaviour of it.

In the headpiece above, a hint is taken from the Bayeux Tapestry, in which the creatures in the border, though mostly in symmetrical pairs, are yet slightly different—one bird has a little more trouble with its worm than the other.

Expressive drawing is realistic drawing; for every touch of expression is a declaration of one more of the qualities of the object.

Before the period of sophistication set in, in the Sixteenth Century, the action given to a subject was a simple, common one—a person carrying a load, digging with a spade, reading a book, speaking to another, or standing waiting. These actions required in the figure a certain mechani-

Fig. 85.

cal aptitude. The body must bend in this way, the elbow will project in that way, and so on.

Now it is extremely important that the attitude proper to the action should be accepted in all its awkwardness, if awkward it is. If, with all possible nimbleness of brain, the artist still finds the form is angular, he must accept it as such, and must devise his composition accordingly.

This means that he must compose his forms by balance of line and mass, and not by suavity. To test his understanding of the balance of mass and line, let the reader cut out some straight-sided shapes, some of which are long, out of dark paper, and arrange them melodiously within a rectangle. Being debarred the use of curves he must balance the awkward pieces against one another, as in Fig. 87.

The decorators of the Nineteenth Century fell into two grievous errors. First, they adopted the suavity of the later Renaissance as a peculiarly appropriate mannerism, and secondly, they were obsessed by the belief that decoration followed laws which exempted it from some of the canons of pictorial art. Both of these ideas tended to obliterate expression.

Fig. 86.

Suavity is, of course, not an error in itself, but it is a most fruitful source of defect. By suavity, we mean the melodious flow and interchange of curves. As a method of relating form to form it is extremely potent. It has the demerit unfortunately of being easy. It plays great havoc with the figure, for, as it gracefully wanders over the design, it draws the limbs (which are readily

treated as lines) into unnatural, if graceful, postures. MICHELANGELO could contrive that figures thus turned into curved units should seem dominated by an emotion which made their twisted poses the natural result and index of it, but who beside him has succeeded ? Our newest buildings are still ornamented with " decorative figures," with precisely the same artistic value as the clock and bronzes on the Victorian mantelpiece.

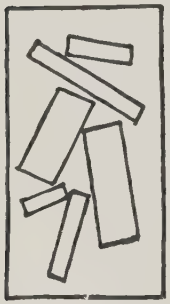


FIG. 87.

The primary canon of the art of the later Renaissance—that the whole is vastly more important than the part, and consequently that the part is of little importance beyond contributing its note to the effect—had an extremely bad influence on art. For this apotheosis of the whole, chiming well with the notion of grandiose organisation of society under such monarchs as LOUIS XIV., became established as one of the main characteristics of High Art and of the Grand Style, so that there has come down to our own time a glibness of composition which shelters under the dogma of the exigencies of decorative conditions.

BOTTICELLI is one of the greatest masters of composition of line, but, though gracefulness is present in his work in unusually great measure, it was not the same thing as the suavity of the

later Renaissance. He conceived exceedingly graceful forms, but he did not make graceful what was not graceful. He did not use an overgloss of gracefulness. There is in his work precisely that frank acceptance of awkward angularity (as of elbow and knee) which, in his day, there was no attempt to avoid.

A clue to expression is *to follow the action on*, and to see its sequence.

Compare, for example, these two versions of a couplet in TASSO's *Jerusalem Delivered*—

" Man goeth forth to labour with the sun,
But with the night all creatures draw to sleep."
EDWARD FAIRFAX.

" The day our labour claims, with toil opprest,
Each creature gives the night to needful rest."
JOHN HOOLE.

It is clear that HOOLE could not imagine the actions, and had no sense of sequence. He was a slave to the " exigencies of artistic conditions." Not only, in FAIRFAX'S version, are the actions apposite, but the sequence so extends the idea that the mind enters an illimitable expanse of reverie.

CHAPTER 23.

DEGENERATION AND REVIVAL

If we cannot express, let us frankly fall back upon *degeneration*. The great fault of decorators since the early part of the Sixteenth Century has been their insincerity. They have not really wanted to portray the subjects they have introduced. This insincerity was greatly stimulated by the romantic turn of literature in Italy, probably as an escape from the prohibitory tendencies of the Counter-Reformation. The fanciful ideas of Ariosto and Tasso were extremely popular, and they had the character, as have similar ideas in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, of presenting images, which, since their exploits are very similar, are not individually essential to the story, and can be isolated from it. The emblem, which is again an isolated image, and has nothing to do with connected story, was becoming popular. The images merely embodied an emblematic significance. This attachment of a secondary, and often a far-fetched, meaning to a form

Fig. 88.

had then, and always has, a tendency to reduce the interest in its reality. The law of degeneration begins to operate. This law is that a healthy mind must devote itself to some sort of objective consideration, and that, as there are but two kinds for the mind to engage itself with, the real and the geometrical, as it loses its grip of one it moves to the other.

One cause of this loss of grip is forgetfulness, and this very naturally arises when there is no need to remember. No case could be so favourable to forgetfulness as that of the emblem or symbol. A good instance is the Arab charm, the Hand of Fatima, which degenerated from a proper hand to a symmetrical form with two thumbs (Fig. 88). The charm being known as a charm required only to be recognised as such, and not as a hand. A particularly good example again is the heraldic lion. It began as a realistic representation of the real beast. Then it got associated with a person, and its need to be a real animal ceased. So the mind moved over to a geometrical pattern, a harmonious tangle of forms which embodied a fanciful creature recog-

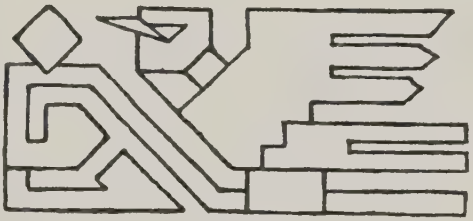


Fig. 89.

nised as a lion by the heralds. In our own day the heraldic devices of noble houses being regarded solely as ornaments, and the families forgotten, the mind took a new turn as regards inn signs, and so the red lion and the golden lion have become again of a realistic kind.

Decorative suitability also causes degeneration.

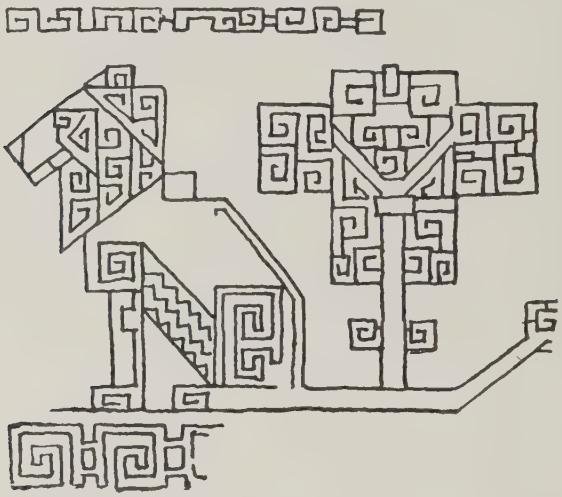


Fig. 90.

If a person feels very strongly the æsthetic value of geometrical system, especially when the object which is decorated is much in mind, and there is a relative neglect of meaning (for to-day there are many people who find the world rather too much with them, and want to escape, even into vacuity of thought) he will very likely favour what we may call *rhyme*, in form, and this is a fruitful source of degeneration.

In Fig. 89 we use lines in only three directions, except in the beak. The lines are either vertical, horizontal, or are at 45 degrees—they repeat or rhyme with the borders and with one another.

Fig. 90 is dominated by the Greek-key motif. In both these examples the design begins as a well-drawn creature with expressive gesture. It

Fig. 91.

is them metamorphosed in the chosen manner. It is very important that the system of rhyming should be simple, and should be carried out whole-heartedly. To compromise with it—to allow lines more sympathetic to the real form to creep in will spoil all. What really happens, or should happen, is that the artist sets out with two artistic ideas—one is an æsthetic melody of

certain kind, as this Greek-key-like one, the other is lion and tree. What the artist loses grip of in this case is the external imitative features—he keeps the essential character—unless, indeed, he can only make ugly things. The fanciful

Fig. 92.

notions—of goblins, monsters, and the like, which came into favour as the Sixteenth Century wore on, gave the less capable artists a rare opportunity. Such a man as De Vries peopled decoration with the most hideous and stupid creations.

Fig. 91 contains some pinks degenerated by bold curvature. Fig. 92 is another example of the pink degenerated—the technique is allowed to predominate.

Figs. 93 and 94 are two further examples of degeneration. Here symmetry is present ; symmetry which has so important a place in decora-

Fig. 93.

tion, perhaps through the stress of what in Chapter 26 we call *polarity*. Symmetry, by repeating a statement *exactly*, reduces its relation to reality, retards imagination, and so puts the mind in a mood to attend to æsthetic melody. It is therefore an extremely potent agent in decoration.

When the mind moves from the geometrical to the real there is an incoming of expression,

which gives a flavour of hopefulness to the work. There are many instances of this in the art of the Dark Ages, when men were using geometrical elements, and their minds began to stir with a desire for reality. Perhaps the most noteworthy instances are in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon work—as in the Book of Kells and the

Fig. 94.

Lindisfarne Gospels. In these and similar cases the artist sets to work to repeat and re-fashion the interlacings which he has inherited, but adds heads, limbs and wings, and in so doing creates the most impossible monsters, which have yet about them evidences of attentive vision, and a love of nature. The basis of the design is the pattern, not the monster. and, similarly, identifiable leaves and flowers may be engrafted upon

a geometrical pattern, as in Fig. 96, provided the geometrical pattern predominates in the mind. If the identity of the plant predominates, a growth which belies the nature of the plant must be avoided.

It was consideration of this point which prompted the present writer to compile the *Craftsman's Plant Book*, in which a large number of figures of plants from the herbals of the Six-

Fig. 95.

teenth Century are reproduced. Fig. 97 is one of them. These figures were done so that readers could identify the plants, and therefore had to be true. But the age was one of very deficient botanical knowledge, and was one also in which rhythmical beauty was set much store by. Hence, in these drawings, we have an extremely pleasant balance between truth and rhythmical order. Morris and Burne-Jones both drew inspiration from these old herbals.

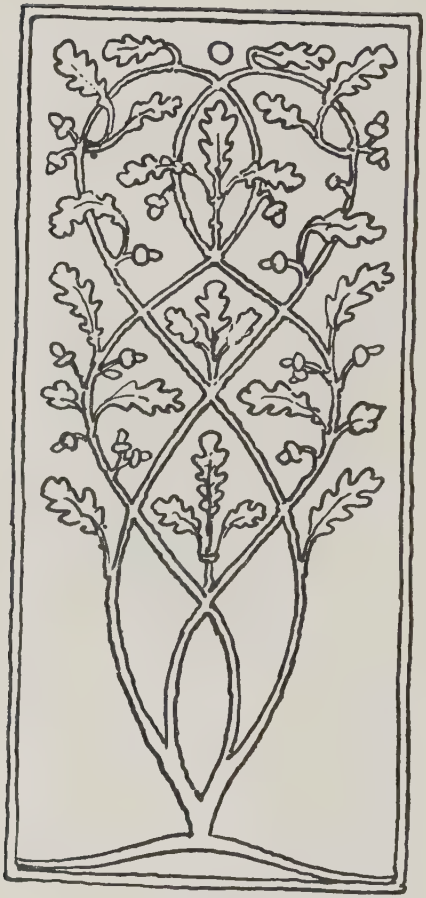


Fig. 96.

Fig. 97.

Buckhorn Plantain.
(*From the "Craftsman's Plant Book," Fig.* 663.)

CHAPTER 24

THE WANDERING EYE

We might have begun our whole study with a reference to the wandering of the eye, and to breadth of vision, for it may be doubted whether but for them decoration would exist at all.

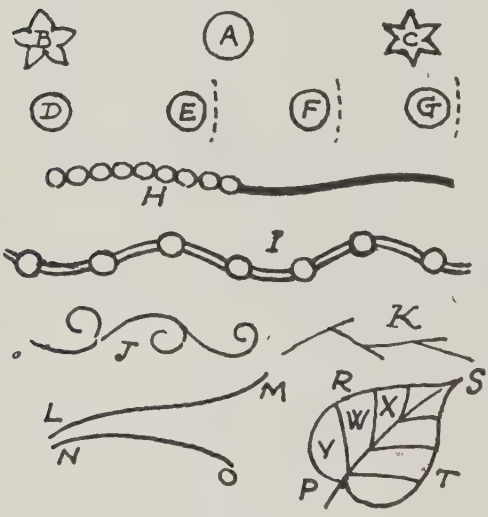


Fig. 98.

By *breadth of vision* we mean that if the eye is directed to *A* (Fig. 98), the stars *B* and *C* will also be seen at the same time, and the observer will be conscious that the star *B* has five points, and the star *C* has six. But *B* and *C* will not be so clearly seen as *A*, and the eye will tend to move to one or other of them, to see more clearly what it is. Now this moving will depend on

certain circumstances. The broader the vision the less there will be occasion for the eye to move, the narrower the vision the more need will there be. But the mind may not want the eye to move. Whether it wants it to move depends upon the period during which it requires the attention to be concentrated upon this or that subject. We shall see later on in Chapter 28 that the wandering of the eye is related to the subjective and objective attitudes of mind. Here we will consider what happens when the eye concentrates, and when it passes its attention along.

In the middle of the Nineteenth Century people's observation was concentrated. They seemed to be able to switch their attention on and off, and so to move from one investigation to another without any thought of there being any connection between the two. People of this kind observe a bowl (let us say) and also observe its decoration, but they see them separately. They are quite willing, therefore, that the decoration shall be a copper-plate portrait of Queen VICTORIA, or a view of the Menai Bridge. And if one demands that there should be a more distinct relationship between the two, they will demur, for they regard whatever is done to the picture to bring it into relationship to the bowl as a modification and therefore a falsification of it.

The Romans were equally fond of the same sort

of decoration—decoration by isolated, diverse, elements, which need to be seen separately, somewhat as one looks at pictures in an illustrated newspaper.

Decoration so disconnected we are tempted to outclass at once on the ground of lack of unity. The lovers of it will however retort that unity can only be had at a price, a price which they are not prepared to pay, the loss of close definition and of cogent truth.

Let us pass to consider in what manner the eye behaves when it wanders. It moves from the clearly seen to the less clearly seen. Looking at *D* (Fig. 98), it moves to *E*, to *F*, and then to *G*, and so on, unless through breadth of vision its gaze upon *D* permits a more remote form than *E*, say *F*, to come into range. In that case it moves to *F* and takes *E* quickly on the way.

The same thing, of course, goes on with a line, which is, as it were, a continuous series of dots or masses. Hence the eye runs along lines.

The sequence of forms seen by the eye as it moves is extremely important. The example I, in Fig. 98, illustrates this. It consists of a strongly marked line, upon which occur little circles. Let us colour these circles alternately blue and green, and then, some distance along, make one of them yellow. It is clear that the eye will run along the line, and the effect blue—green, blue—green, blue—green, will enter the mind. Then, how-

ever, the eye comes upon the spot of yellow, and a new sensation is felt.

It is obvious that the eye reads different subjects as it passes along *J* and *K* (Fig. 98). It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the value in such cases of the different lengths, angles and curves. But it is only too easy in studying these matters, which are so clear, to overlook two important facts. One is that the eye must read more than one line at a time, and the other is that it must read the space between them. It must read the lines *LM* and *NO* together, apperceiving also the space which they enclose.

The eye travelling from *P* to *S* (Fig. 98) must not only perceive the curve *PRS* and the curve *PTS* both separately and together, and the whole space between them, but it must observe the spaces *V*, *W*, *X*, etc. The shapes of these differ, and the eye passes therefore from shape to shape, through a series. The mind receives a certain impression from passing through this series—an impression somewhat similar to that experienced in listening to the successive phrases of a piece of music. The impression not only differs in the message it conveys, but also in the relative degree of ease with which the mind receives it. The mind receives the regular and the graceful very readily. Hence when the forms are simple and regular the mind is able to attend to the main idea or sentiment of the work with sureness. We

are not surprised, therefore, to find ourselves at once impressed by the sentiment in paintings by GIOTTO and FRA ANGELICO, and in such a picture as WHISTLER'S *Portrait of the Painter's Mother*.

The wandering eye pursues subject through a sequence of forms, and the decorator must devise this sequence.

The student should assume that his eye does not adequately apperceive forms, and the sequence of them, and he must set about training it to do so. He must first assure himself that he sees the whole of a form at once. He must open his eyes wide and gaze at the form, and must make sure, if he can, that he does not look at it line by line, though, of course, he must do that also, but that he receives all the edges and corners of it at one time. He will feel a certain loss of cogency in his sight ; he will feel his power of reasoning diminished. But this will pass away, and he will realise that the broader vision is cogent enough, and that he has gained a new power—the power of measuring forms in relation to one another.

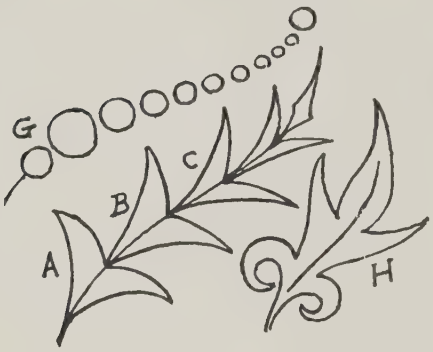


FIG. 99.

The forms which make up the series *ABC* in Fig. 99 differ slightly one from the next. There is in these differences a natural sequence. The last form is very different from the first, but the change from first to last has come about in an organic manner. In the form *G* all the parts are circles, and therefore the elements of change are limited to size, and the changing form of the spaces between the circles. Sometimes the forms which the eye is compelled to take in its course are differentiated by contrast, as in *H*, where the eye is made to feel a sharp jerk.

Fig. 100.

It is obvious that incompetent and careless drawing renders success impossible, merely through introducing, by accident, forms which are not sufficiently akin to make a satisfactory sequence. So also imitative realism retards success, not because it is realistic, but because the method compels the artist to include forms which the eye cannot quickly enough run through.

Decoration must in short employ forms, and series of forms, which the wandering eye can *readily* pass through, and grasp. The eye, when in a " decorative mood," passes at a certain speed, and apperceives at a certain rate, and anything which demands a slower rate fails to be effective,

and pains the eye by demanding attention which cannot be given.

Such a form as that in Fig. 100 is a *phrase*. Many as are its parts the eye passes quickly through the whole, as if it were but a single line.

The decorator's art in large measure consists in devising phrases of this kind. In traditional art, such as was practised in old times and still is practised in the East, the decorator had a certain stock-in-trade of forms, which he used over and over again. We have, unfortunately, got it into our heads that we are clever enough to use only forms we have never used before. This is a great and a foolish error.

Of the way in which the eye moves we need, perhaps, only say further, that it both runs through masses which are equal in size, and runs through varied sizes, that is, from large ones, through intermediate ones, to small ones. There is obviously a different effect—or " tune played " —when there are masses of various sizes and when there are not. We give four examples in Fig. 101. In the first there is a certain gloominess or barbaric fatalism through the similarity of the sizes compelling the mind to confine its feeling in certain bounds.

In the second the use of the stem-line, and of the stalks for the leaves, introduces a variety which relieves the confinement of feeling. In the

third and fourth this liberation goes further, and the mind feels energy.

The reader will gather from what has been said

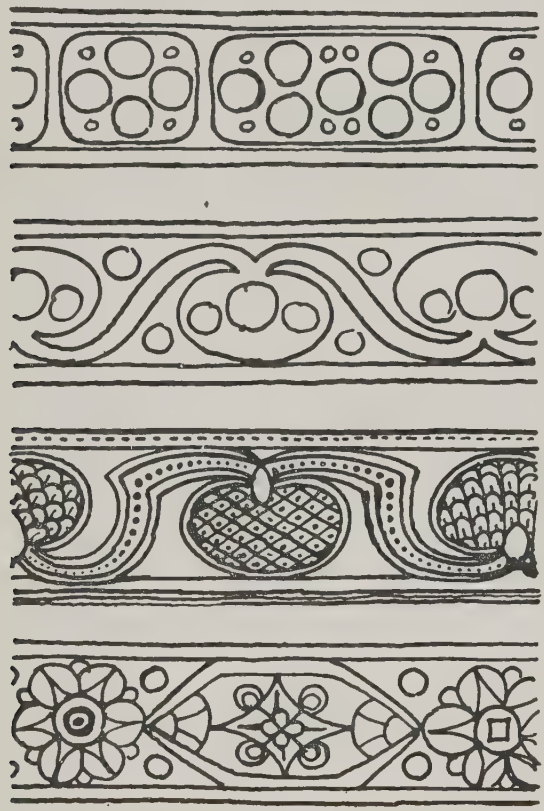


Fig. 101.

that the fault which makes *spottiness* so objectionable is twofold. First, it compels the eye only to observe a certain series of sizes—we do not call a pattern " spotty," however much it may be made up of spots, unless it does this. And,

secondly, it confines the feeling. There seem to be two ways out of this difficulty. The first is based upon the supposition that the eye relates size to distance—distance away from the specta-

Fig. 102.

tor—a sort of perspective. Hence providing two sizes, and therefore two distances, liberates the mind from the feeling of confinement. The other way is to limit the number of spots in the prescribed area, or else to multiply them, for it seems that a certain number give a spotty effect,

and that fewer or more do not. We might cite Fig. 102 as an example. In it apparently the number of spots is right, the effect is not spotty. The example also illustrates the use of the small spot in association with the large one, and the presence of it has doubtless a good effect on the pattern.

Particularly important is the behaviour of the eye as it is influenced in its wanderings by the lines and forms which come into the field of vision.

Fig. 103.

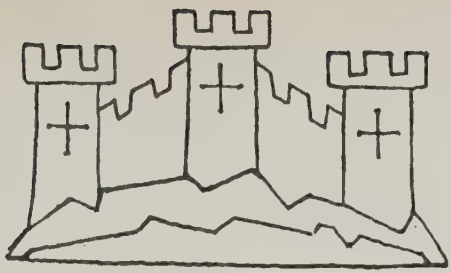
As the eye moves from point to point it tends to lay a trail from one to the other.

It can hardly be denied that it is the office of art to supply the trails, and to make them worthy of being traced by the eye. But it can also not be doubted that sometimes the absence of the trail is preferable, and that in such cases the beholder delights in the sudden leap of the eye, and the uncertainty of the trail. If in one age we find every trail given, and every relationship determined, we are pretty sure to find

in the succeeding a somewhat chaotic, unpolished style prevailing.

The eye runs along lines, but as more than one line enters the field of vision it tends to pass *across* the intervening spaces, or to pass *through* the spaces, probably in a wavy course.

The eye moves differently over spaces which are differently bounded, and therefore it never moves in the same way over different forms. Hence the various parts of an object have each their peculiar and appropriate trails for the eye (Fig. 103).



CHAPTER 25

CONVENTIONAL FORMS

A CONVENTIONAL form is one which contains some suggestion of reality, but also appeals to the eye as a melodic arrangement—as a pattern. There are three kinds. One kind is drawn as a real thing, but with such prejudice towards melody that the melody is allowed to make itself evident, and the imitation is carried no further than to express the idea of some real thing. This idea should not be a mere identifiable resemblance, but should be an expression of natural charm and beauty. We give a number of examples in Figs. 104 *sqq*. It will be seen that they are instances of *indicative representation*.

A great deal of pleasant effect can be obtained with such forms as these by the use of a few bright colours. Thus the " nests " in Figs. 108 and 109 may be coloured with two greens and a blue, or two blues and a green, with a few spots of yellow or pale pink on the flowers. The upper flower in Fig. 104 may become stripes of orange

Fig. 104.

Fig. 105.

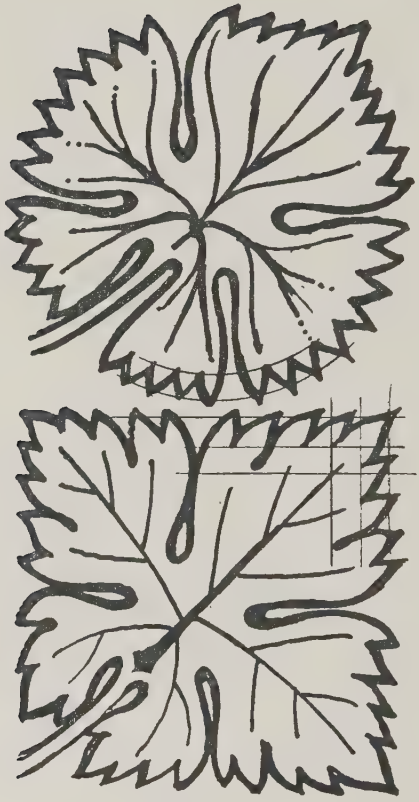


Fig. 106.

and pale yellow, or white. The other flowers may in part be coloured with a blended pink, and so on. The castle in the headpiece may itself be in two tones of lavender, the battlements and walls a tinge darker and slightly different in hue, the

Fig. 107.

upper line of ground emerald green, the lower bright blue.

The idea of *conventionalising*—knocking an unfortunate form about till it is in " a decorative condition "—should not be allowed place in the mind.

The second kind we have amply illustrated in Chapter 23 under *Degeneration*—it is where a real form and a pattern are mixed together, the pattern, as it were, overgrowing the form as ivy overgrows a stone pillar.

Fig. 108.

The third kind is when a geometrical form happens to look like something real, as a trailing line looks like a growing stem, and lines or masses offshooting from it look like leaves and flowers.

We often speak of the *conventional* foliage of the Roman, Gothic and Renaissance styles.

Although some of these had degenerated from representations of the acanthus, and some from the vine, we do not look in them for any likeness to those plants. We take them merely as convenient and effective decorative elements. We

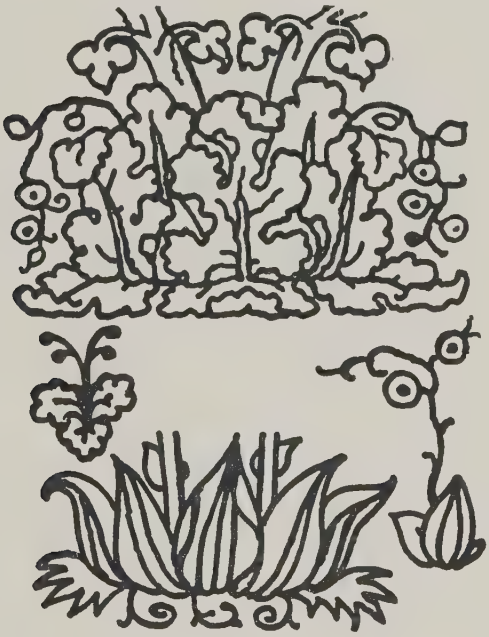


Fig. 109.

recognise the life and spirit of them, and their suitability in scale for their positions. They are, indeed, rather geometrical forms which have some look of nature, than in any sense portrayals. The illustrations which we give in Figs. 111 to 114 explain what sort of forms we refer to. It is

remarkable how near to nature they seem to take us. And so varied are natural plant-forms themselves, that it does not occur to us to ask what plants are represented ; for it is evident that if a successful melodic structure catches the attention the demand for reality is abated.

We have placed our reference to conventional

Fig. 110.

forms after our remarks upon the wandering of the eye because they arise from the trailing of the eye, and the formation of those phrases which we have illustrated in Fig. 100. Draw a wandering line, and let phrases expand from it here and there, and something like the foliage which was in vogue in the late Dark Ages and early Middle Ages is pretty sure to develop.

A kind of composition which has produced

a great deal of beautiful conventional foliage is that which consists of a display of curvature against a simple line. The examples in Fig. 116

Fig. 111.

will perhaps sufficiently indicate the possibilities of this method. The example *A* is derived from the famous Trajan Scroll, which is a particularly elaborate instance of purely melodic composition; for the natural suggestion in it is really very small.

No forms are so suitable for decoration, or

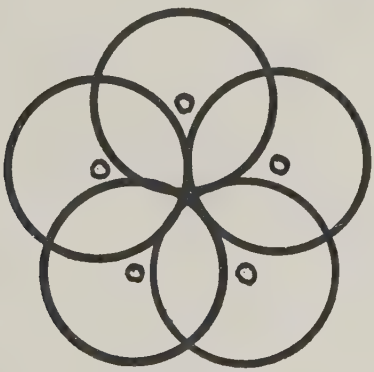


Fig. 112.

so likely to lead to success, as these conventional ones, because they are fashioned at the moment for the particular purpose. The artist is under no restraint at all.

To some people representations are true only when they are complete imitations of appearance, and consequently those which are not complete are relatively untrue and conventional. This view might be supported by saying that any omission of peculiarities indicates that the artist

Fig. 113.

is not fully interested in the thing itself, but is influenced by other considerations, and that these must interfere with, and corrupt, the truth. But on the other hand it may be advanced that for a representation to be convincingly true, it is not necessary that it should be exhaustively complete, and that, instead, an

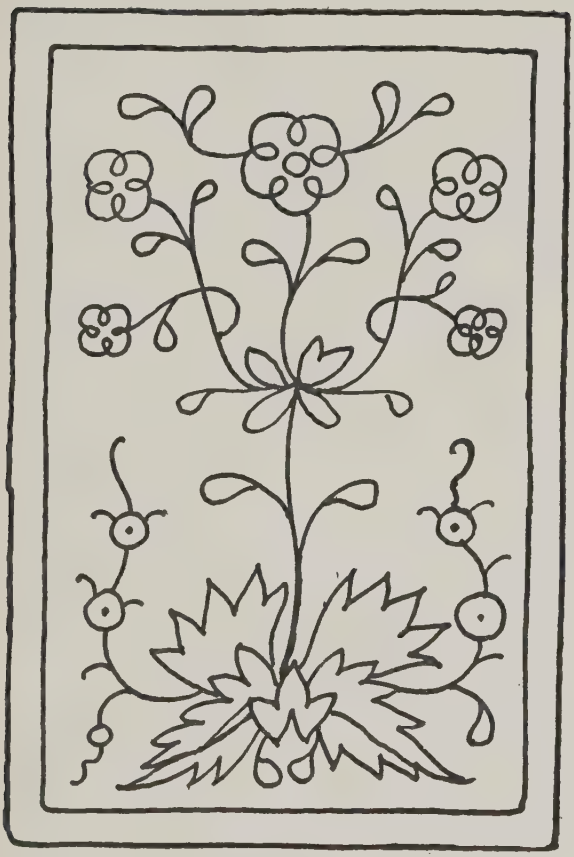


Fig. 114.

abstraction of qualities produces a stronger effect on the mind, and carries conviction

Fig. 115.

better. Exactly in what way the abstraction shall be made depends upon technical and mental circumstances. But the abstracted ren-

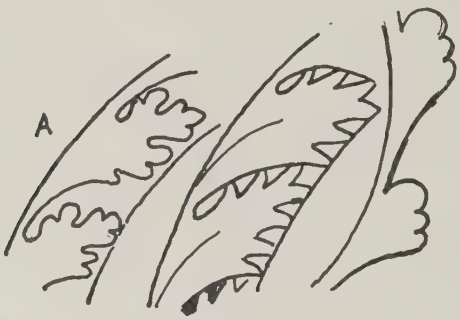


Fig. 116.

dering, however simple, or even crude, it may be, is not to be confused with a conventional one. Within its conditions it is pungently real.

CHAPTER 26

THE THEME OF THE OBJECT

We have already, in Chapter 24, spoken of the trails or paths which the wandering eye lays or makes for itself as it moves over the surface of an object, influenced by the various lines of it. This action of the eye is æsthetic. Every individual will plot out these lines in a manner consonant with his own æsthetic sensibility, and he will be

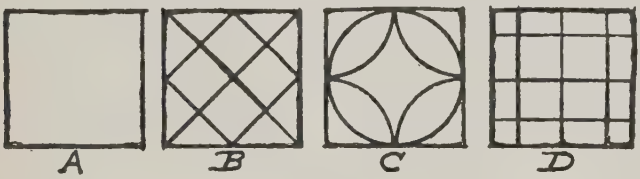


Fig. 117.

swayed in so doing by various recent and temporary experiences. His eye will not always choose the same paths. But whatever variations his choice may be liable to from day to day, he will never choose the same paths for different parts of the object. As the spaces differ in width, size, etc., so will the eye pass in different ways. Hence nothing is so wrong as to put the same pattern alike over handle, body and spout of a teapot.

Moreover, though the eye may tread innumerable paths over an area, the will makes choice of a certain series out of the multitude. *B*, *C* and *D* (Fig. 117) are all *themes of the object A*. They correspond to different moods.

If now we combine the power of making melody with such a theme, we produce such an

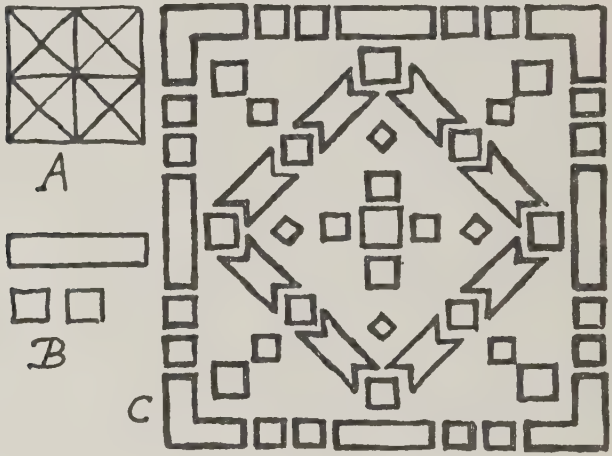


Fig. 118.

example of decoration as Fig. 118, wherein *A* is the theme of the object, *B* is a melodic theme, and *C* is the combination of the two. *B* may be dove-grey, yellow ochre and red.

If to such a theme we add the intention to introduce some particular subject as, say, a flower, such as *B* (Fig. 119), then if *A* is the theme of the object, *C* will be the resultant decoration. Hence we may speak of the *theme of the decora-*

tion, which is the theme of the object combined with necessary characteristics of the subject. Obviously, if the subject and the theme are not concordant, one of them must give way. In this case the subject has yielded, for it has allowed five petals to become four.

It is evident that the settling of the theme of the object is the basis of the practice of decoration. The theme for a particular case is, as we have said, chosen by the will from a range of possible themes. To determine which shall be adopted

Fig. 119.

is an act of judgment, or of imagination, which discloses the degree of artistic power possessed by the artist. He prepares to make his decision by considering not only what the object is in itself, but what it is surrounded by. To enable his mind to come to a decision he must make sure that every fact enters it. He must familiarise his mind with every circumstance. Perhaps he can best do this by examining every dimension, every detail, of structure and of form. Bad design practically always comes from insufficient preliminary knowledge of the form to be treated.

Let the mind have the facts, and it will very likely come to a wise decision.

The mind's decision is a judgment not only between conflicting interpretations of the problems proper to and arising from the object itself, but is an assessment of the claims of the desires of the fancy, on the one hand, and the demands of the object's form, on the other.

Definitely belonging to the æsthetic side of the

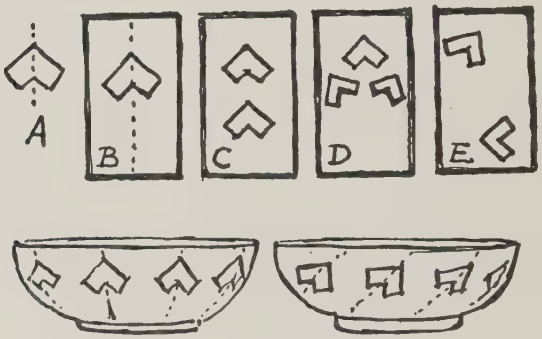


Fig. 120.

question is what we would call the law of *polarity*. This law makes two assumptions : (1) that forms appear to travel in a certain direction, and (2) that over every form there passes, what we may call a *stream of polarity*—south to north as it were. Hence a unit such as *A* (Fig. 120) is " pulled " into a vertical position.

Over a rectangle, such as *B* (Fig. 120), the stream runs down or up the middle and affects the position of units within it. The other

diagrams in the figure illustrate this, *E* showing the units placed as the eye will not permit them to be.

We may speak, too, of an east and west stream, contrary to the north and south one.

The frequent use of symmetrical forms in decoration will not escape notice in this connection.

CHAPTER 27

THE ASSERTION OF THE IDEA—SUBSTITUTION

COMMENDABLE as is the assertion of the object's service, there is, on the other hand, the contention that civilisation is greater than its agents. Economics may be the basis of civilisation, but is not its purpose. To go behind the scenes, and to see how the tricks are done, or to discover which instruments play this or that passage, is neither to see the show nor to listen to the music. Hence it may be claimed that, in art, the idea is superior to the processes and substances which express it.

We have in " Jazz " a crude statement of this principle. " Jazz " is naughty ; a kind of doing what one has been told not to do. It is a coarse demonstration of feeling alive, and to feel alive is to have a sense of freedom from restraint and constraint. Hence it means a denial of law, method and purpose. It is a refusal to take the economics of life seriously. " Jazz," however, like all artistic expression, is not as naughty as it looks. A " Jazz ' pattern which denies unity entirely is intolerable, and it is not without significance that " Jazz " music is closely

associated with dancing, which is necessarily unified by rhythm of some sort. In pattern-making " Jazz " pushes the denial of the logic of the object to the extreme.

The opposite of " Jazz " is formality, which is necessarily cold, sombre, austere and severe (Fig. 121). Nevertheless, though not lively it expresses life, but life rather in the sense of organic unity than of activity.

Note that to keep the effect sad, variety of form and variety of size should be avoided. Hence, in this figure, we have made the lines which seem to radiate from the centre, not do so. They are more nearly parallel. This avoids variety, which would express cheerfulness.

Fig. 121.

The refusal to observe the logic of the object is not a novelty of our own day. It is characteristic of the Baroque, or Rococo, style of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries. That style arose in part from a mood of mind which thought of wide schemes, and expected no distinction in details. Just as this mood placed persons below broad political organisation, and thought of that organisation as world-wide, so it not only regarded the details of an object, its material, and its construction, as secondary and not to be

emphasised, but it even merged the individuality of the object in the scheme. And scheme meant not merely the room, but the house and the terrace, and the park—indeed all that such a name as Versailles suggests. Objects were not to be judged therefore by themselves, but with the rest of the scheme. And so, if such an object as the candlestick in Fig. 122 is in itself ugly, we must remember that we must not judge it alone, nor expect it to be worth looking at by itself.

Fig. 122.

With us an object must be a complete entity in itself, because we place importance on the expression of its service. But this view has not always been taken, as we have shown, and, indeed, the young housewife of to-day follows the other line of feeling when she chooses her tea-set to go with her room, and puts on a gown to suit both.

Are we, then, in our decoration to stress the economy of life, as represented by our articles of use, or are we to interpret our civilisation as being something above the machinery of it? The art of different periods of history shows us that at different times, and in different places, and for different occasions, this or that view has been taken.

If the decoration predominates over the object, or tends to *substitute* itself for it in our regard, it has to do so under one of three different con-

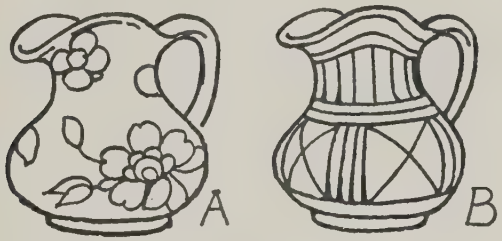


Fig. 123.

ditions : (*a*) when the object's form is *not* interfered with ; (*b*) when it is partly interfered with ; and (*c*) when the decoration becomes the form of the object.

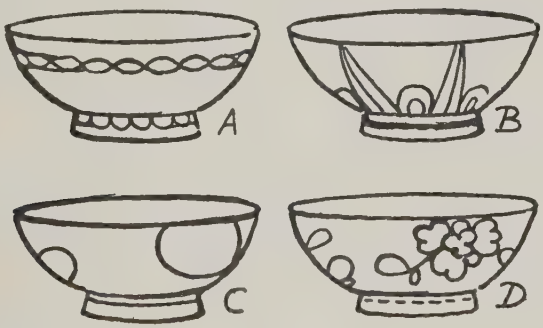


Fig. 124.

The bowls in Fig. 124 illustrate the first of these, and many examples are to be found in Chinese and Japanese art. In *A* and *B* the decoration accords with what we may regard as

the natural structure of the object. They illustrate two different themes. In *C* and *D*, however, the decoration does not accord with the structure, or does so only by a balanced distribution, which is sympathetic with the form rather than demonstrative of it.

It is obvious that the degree of assertiveness in the colour has much to do with the tendency of

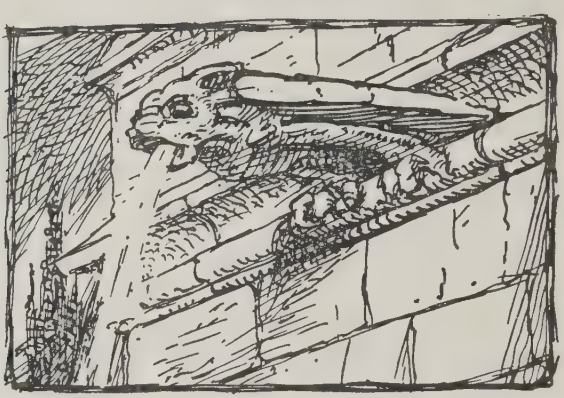


Fig. 125.

the ornament to predominate over the object. By asserting parts we tend to cast the whole into oblivion. The simple case in Fig. 126 is another instance. Here, if we paint the legs, between the bands, red, we somewhat falsify the statement. We substitute the notion " red and white " for the notion " stool," and we shorten the apparent length of the legs.

And, in considering this matter of substitution, it must be borne in mind that a treatment which

obliterates the object when we first see it, with its aggressive decoration, does not do so when we have been forewarned. This we find to be the case in the third class of conditions, that is, when the subject gives the form. The Toby jug is one of the commonest examples, the Eagle lectern is another, and one which is not very much objected to. Decoration of this kind, which seems so opposite to reason, has been in vogue in all ages and all climes. So common, indeed, are the examples of it, that we are compelled to pause before we continue to assert the principle which for so long has been drummed into the art student—the law of subordination. A visit to the British Museum will soon convince the student that there is more in decorative art than the cultivation of logical principles. Art is very real, it has much to do with actually being alive, and being happy ; and this happiness, this vitality, finds expression sometimes in this extreme substitution of subject for object. In Fig. 128 are three examples from Greek vases in the British Museum.

Fig. 126.

But there can be no doubt that when substitution goes so far as to become deceptively realistic it becomes unacceptable, for the mind must always be able to get back from subject to object —from the world of idea to the world of reality.

Hence, in the case of the Toby jug, the most successful examples are those in which the colouring is somewhat arbitrary, as when the colours are in bands around it, and are therefore in accordance with the theme of the object, instead of being confined to the shapes of the details.

Amongst examples of substitution one of the best beloved is the gargoyle. It alone should make us think twice about our formal principles. There are surely few of us who do not prefer the dragon gargoyle to the lead pipe, especially when it rains hard and the monster is in action.

Fig. 127.

Substitution of the second class of conditions is when the object's form is only partially interfered with. Somewhat similar is that which consists in modifying the form in obedience to an æsthetic conception. Examples are common in furniture of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries—for example, where the form is made wavy instead of straight.

A degree of substitution of subject for object may be effected by *scale*. Fig. 18 shows three figures habited in patterns of different sizes. It is evident that the larger the pattern the less the person is herself. Hence the Quaker mind,

which in all things requires appearance and reality to agree, rejects the florid, not because it is elaborate, but because it upsets the values of reality.

Fig. 128.

We see a similar effect of scale in such cases as the impress of an armorial book-stamp upon a binding. The larger the arms the more peer or *parvenu*, the smaller the stamp the more poet.

CHAPTER 28

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE

By the term *objective* we refer to the state of mind when there predominates a regard for things round about us which we strive to observe and to understand. By *subjective* we mean that our thoughts predominate in our mental operations, so that things other than ourselves are not conceived as things capable of being known, but as reflections of what we already know.

These two opposite attitudes of the mind produce two different ways of seeing, for the eye is the servant of the mind. The objective produces the concentrative way of seeing; the subjective produces the wandering. The objective eye seeks for new details that it may get to know them; the subjective needs only to find such obvious marks of identity as enable it to identify what it already knows.

The present-day view of what is decorative is strongly subjective. It has been becoming more and more so during the last fifty years.

It would probably be truer to regard the objectivism of Victorian times as a wedge driven in by the great advance in engineering science and

in the physical sciences, than as the last phase of the later Renaissance.

The Renaissance reached its objective climax in such art as that of RUBENS, in which forcible demonstration of facts predominates. It had climbed to that position from the early years of the Fifteenth Century. After the time of RUBENS there began a subjective reaction, which, indeed, Rubens's *flair* for the heroic fostered. It showed itself first in the adoption of an artistic worship of classical types—an imitation of Roman ideas, as then understood. Portraits in Roman costume which were then in vogue indicate this attempt to displace the real. One cannot set one's mind upon an ideal without relinquishing the real to some extent. Art became a matter of mood, heavy and dull as it was. In the age of Louis XV. the predominance of mood advanced still further. The schemes of BOUCHER—the style, we may say, of Madame de Pompadour—moved always away from reality and inquiry towards self-indulgence. Later, the Greek cult and the Romantic zeal carried on the same departure from objective realism.

But throughout all these periods science and engineering were building up a parallel and hostile system, and that ultimately captured the artistic world, in the days of VICTORIA, MEISSONIER, HOLMAN HUNT, FRITH, and POYNTER.

Nevertheless, the other movement went on.

The Romanticists were succeeded by the Tractarians. In art-craftsmanship WHITTINGHAM, the printer, restored the long *s*, SHAW and HUMPHRIES returned to mediæval practices in illumination, quaintnesses were cultivated, and there was a general basking in feelings which one does not disturb by analysis. After all this—RUSKIN, MORRIS, BURNE-JONES, WHISTLER and the symbolic Butterfly, and, ultimately, the ugly picture. It was not unnatural that the merciless objectivism of the Mid-Victorians should lead the more imaginative of them to twist their objectivism into an outlandish rendering of their own civilization, and so make it unreal and queer, or to seek shelter in fictitious subjects, where criticism could not follow them. Hence the peculiar hybridity of the pre-Raphaelites.

If the casual glance, the wandering eye, comes with the subjective attitude of mind, and if, again, it is favourable to decoration, the richest developments and the purest forms of decorative art should be found in those places where and times when the subjective has flourished. And this is precisely what we find. The Eastern peoples are at once the most subjective in thought and the most decorative in art, and European art has been most decorative when, in the realm of thought, subjective ideas have held sway, notably between the Fourth and the Eleventh Centuries. Europe, then, was Eastern rather than Western.

How appropriate to decoration is the subjective attitude of mind is impressed upon us at every turn—

(1) The subjective mind is not particular about exact truth of colour; consequently, it is not offended if colours are chosen for their beauty, instead of for their truth. Indeed, as it favours symbolism it encourages falsification.

(2) As forms are only required to be recognised, not to be inquired into, their precise shape is unimportant. It suffices if they are identifiable. They, therefore, need not be detailed with exactness, but, on the other hand, they must not be rendered in a confused manner, for that demands a degree of attention which the eye cannot give. Forms must be clear and simple.

(3) The eye, not needing to observe intently, is set free to indulge in the enjoyment of melody.

(4) As exactness is not demanded, the form may more easily be made agreeable to its decorative situation.

But beyond all these advantages, which are of a technical character, it may well be contended that the operation of the mind, when decoration is concerned, will not permit an objective notion to engage it, because the thought of something round about, and external to self, is already taken up by the regard for the object—the mind not being able to follow two objective interests at once. Hence if objective expression is forced

it must lead to the destruction of the object's identity.

The distinguishing characteristic of objective representation is that it states numerous facts impartially, and leaves the spectator to choose. It is, indeed, admitted because the spectator is in the mood of wanting to choose. The work is therefore full of all sorts of facts. It is a miniature encyclopædia of information. The eye necessarily tends to linger, and it is therefore only by strongly marked attractions that it can be drawn away. The most potent means of leading the eye about under such circumstances is *line*. Hence decoration which is made up of objective renderings is generally dominated by bold lines and a prevailing suavity. Fig. 131 in the next chapter may serve as an illustration.

This suavity ultimately destroys the very quality it has been called in to help. For suavity itself becomes an expression of æsthetic sensibility, which is subjective in character, and leads away from objective meaning.

In cases of extreme objective statement, the statement is made upon a small scale and is reserved within a small panel, as in Sèvres porcelain. The statement is viewed apart from the object, and at a little distance lapses into a vague mass of colour.

In Fig. 129 we illustrate the subjective opposite to the objective. The diaper or *shimmer-patterns*

baffle the intellect, and compel it to cease inquiry and merely to *feel*. Note the importance of this *baffling* of the intellect, in what we may call the

Fig. 129.

" rhetoric " of decoration. Note, too, as regards Fig. 129, that the patterns displace shading and other imitative technicalities.

CHAPTER 29

RAPHAEL'S MANNER

LEONARDO DA VINCI, RAPHAEL and MICHELANGELO sought to understand, and to make forms demonstrably real, but only to understand and to make real what interested them. What they sought to express was the thought within, not the things round about.

They consequently excluded whatever they had not absorbed into their conception. What remained was a mirror of their thought. Their art was entirely recognitive, that is, they recorded only what in natural appearances they recognised as corresponding to their own understanding. It is as if the little details—details so precious to other and equally gifted artists—which give verisimilitude and individual identity to real things, were, like moss on the stone, something not proper to be there. SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS declared this simplification to be essential to art of the highest type.

"There is an absolute necessity for the Painter to generalize his notions; to paint particulars is not to paint nature, it is only to paint circumstances. When the Artist has conceived in his imagination the image of perfect beauty, or the abstract idea of forms, he may

be said to be admitted into the great Council of Nature." —Sir Joshua Reynolds, Note III. to Fresnoy's *Art of Painting*. London. 1783.

Raphael may be regarded as the most typical exponent of the decorative manner which followed from the kind of representation which came into vogue in his day. This manner hardened into a system, and has come down to our own time as the orthodox treatment. When it arose, pictorial art was trying to detach its images from their backgrounds, by rounding up the forms with strong light and shade. The method consists in developing a strong shadow down one side of the form, and graduating it into high light on the other. The result is to produce a dark silhouette against the background on the one side, and a light silhouette on the other, with a melting gradation between.

Now it is important to note how the eye observes these tones, melting into one another. Will it move from *A* to *C* (Fig. 130), that is, into the shade, and reversely into the light, or will it not rather run along each tone separately ? It is certainly more likely to move into the shade when the gradation spreads gently over a wide space, as from *D* to *F*.

But if in *GH* and *MN* we copy the shading of *AC* and *DF*, but in some pleasant colour, say pink, we shall find that the eye will move from the light into the shade, and particularly if the tint is pale.

In these instances the eye moves into the shades because the colour attracts it. The importance of the treatment in Japanese art is familiar to every one.

When the shading is strong, even though in colour, it compels the eye to take a linear course running along the lights or darks. In the Fifteenth Century an area was covered with a bright

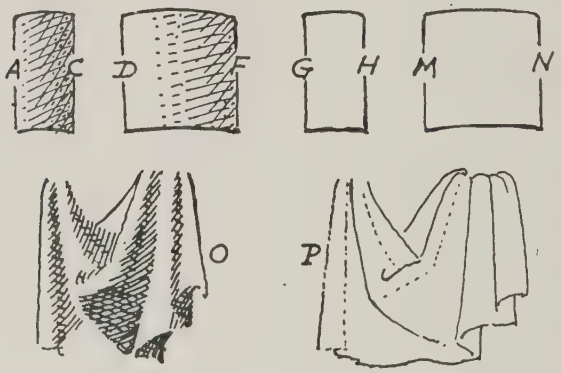


Fig. 130.

colour and the lights, as particularly in draperies, were worked on in white which blended into the colour. Often the white was the untouched ground of panel, vellum or wall, and the whole of the form was made out in bright colour.

The Raphaelesque manner is very cogent. It is as clear as a geometrical pattern. It may provoke curiosity by its diversity, but it never prompts an inquiry to which it does not immediately respond. This is perhaps not strictly

true, for two qualities sometimes enter into it, which somewhat cause the eye to linger objectively. These are: (1) the use of pictorial brownish shades; and (2) the use of dark tints in the shades. When the shades are relatively pale, and are bright and clear in colour, the result is much more decorative. This secret BOUCHER and other artists of the early Eighteenth Century learnt. WATTEAU had taught them to leave the gloom of the studio, and to seek the limpid outdoor lighting.

FIG. 131.

As the shading lightens, the effect tends to become less linear and therefore broader, and the eye begins to deal with masses. As we have noted in Chapter 20, the strong objectivism of the Raphaelesque style was often overlaid with a veil of emotional feeling by colouring the parts with diverse bright colours.

In the Raphaelesque manner the tone is graduated throughout the form, although it can be divided into the two general areas of light and shade. In HOLBEIN'S wood-cut designs (as in

most of the wood-cuts in early Sixteenth Century books) the shade is practically of one tone, with a graduated edge, and the light is clear and free of tone. The tone of the shade is relatively pale. As the Sixteenth Century wore on the shade became re-enforced by cross-hatching, and was more boldly graduated, and breadth of effect gave way to a rapid or staccato change of tones.

In painted decoration of the higher kinds (as also in tapestry) the shade developed as a broad

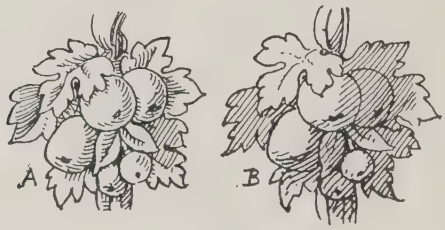


Fig. 132.

mass *obliterating* intermediate forms and running several features together. Thus the subject, as in *B* (Fig. 132), became divided into broad areas, whereas in the earlier manner, as in *A*, the shade impartially did a little service upon each form in an explanatory manner.

Michelangelo, in his ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, perhaps for the first time in painting, used tone in a manner which enveloped, and somewhat obscured, the form. It would be wrong to apply to his treatment the term *obliterative*.

We might apply it to Tintoret's, for in the shades of TINTORET'S figures, as in the *Paradise* (in the Doge's Palace) and the *Crucifixion* (in the Scuola di San Rocco) at Venice, there is little to see, and one's impression is that he intended that there should be little seen, whether he put anything there or not.

CHAPTER 30

A HINT FROM REMBRANDT

In Fig. 133, *A* and *B*, contrast the manner of Raphael with that of Rembrandt. In *A*, the Raphaelesque, the demonstration is entirely clear. We can neither misunderstand, nor escape. All

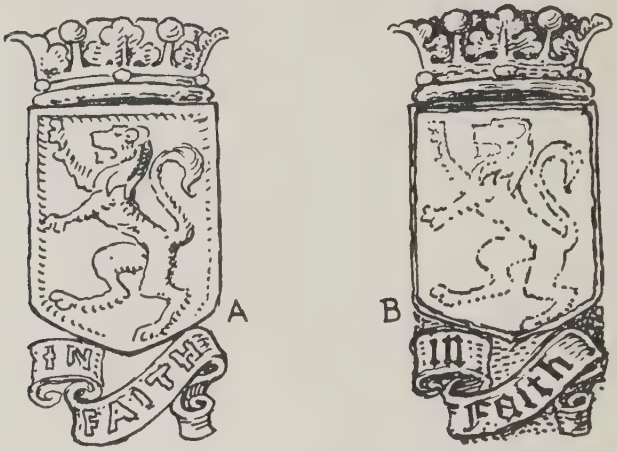


Fig. 133.

the forms are cogently rendered ; all are more or less equal since they are equally evident, and the eye roves from place to place easily. In *B*, on the other hand, the eye broadly notices the reciprocal masses of dark tone, and balances them with the lights. The features, both in the

lights and in the shades (or dark parts), are not readily seen—they do not display themselves as do those in *A*. The eye roams about in the lights and in the shades, and it gets from one mass to another, either by leaping or by passing along narrow connections. It is not *compelled* to run over all the lines of the pattern, as in the other case. While the dark and light masses are in vigorous contrast the forms within them are rendered in subtle variations.

This description of the examples supposes them coloured appropriately. In the uncoloured state the coronet of *B* is clearer than that in *A*, but its details would become lost in the colouring, while those of *A* would become defined.

The reader will not, of course, think by our reference to REMBRANDT that he was a decorator, still less an ornamentist.

CHAPTER 31

RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL SHADING

It is remarkable that rational shading was never fully attempted till the Fifteenth Century. The Greek or Græco-Roman painters got fairly near to an understanding of it, and, indeed, may have succeeded in doing so completely, but the remains of their work do not afford a single instance. They saw light and shade almost as truly as artists of modern times, but there is no evidence that they realised the complete interrelationship of the shades and shadows upon, or cast by, the various elements of a subject. Their works are agglomerations of separately conceived units, united sometimes, however, as in the Battle of the Issus, and some of the smaller things at Naples, and the Ulysses series in the Vatican, into remarkably complete effects.

Except, therefore, for this patch of imitativeness in ancient art, there is neither in East nor West any approach to an understanding of *chiaroscuro* till Masaccio, who was born in 1401 and died in 1428.

The shading in the art of Persia, India, China and Japan, and again in Europe, between the

Third or Fourth and the Fifteenth centuries, is irrational. The shade gathers at this side, or at that, without regard to the direction of the light. Shadows are absent, except in the rare cases when the subject demands them. In flesh there is generally a pale tint all round the edges, graduating to the interior, and suggesting a degree of roundness, or rather of a domed condition of the surface. This is the treatment in all things that were felt to be " round."

Fig. 134.

In later, and more refined, work all the shading is in graduations, which give a certain beauty to the colouring, and respond to a feeling for subtlety of execution. A rule of thumb arose to graduate the colour from one side, no matter which. The dabs of colour on our china and earthenware follow this rule. A brush worked to a chisel point is charged on one side with colour. The stroke necessarily makes a blended effect.

After the fall of the classic civilisation the method in vogue was to use three or four tints, usually considerably different in hue, and handled without graduation or blending, and prepared apparently in bulk, and kept in separate pots. Sometimes, for example, drapery is represented with strips of blue, green and yellow,

water by strips of blue, pale blue, and white, and so on. The mosaics and the illuminations of the Byzantine style afford numerous examples.

The use of colour in this way led naturally away from reality to pattern, so that we often see in mediæval wall paintings, and in illuminations, the strokes of the shading, and the internal lines of definition transformed into pure pattern, as in *A* (Fig. 135). *B* shows the lines of the folds

Fig. 135.

upon leg and thigh. A very beautiful instance of this kind of expression is upon the enamelled figures of the Pala d'Oro at St. Mark's, Venice. Degeneration of this kind had set in before Rome fell.

The last legitimate form of the ancient shading is illustrated in *C*, where, if the reader will cover the dotted lines with lines of appropriate colour, he will obtain a fair representation of the shading and colouring sometimes practised in the later Dark Ages. The outline and the line of colour

near to it—but not touching it—are the sole representatives of the imitative painting of Græco-Roman times, which in the portraits upon mummies of the Ptolemaic period reached an assertive realism.

We have rather overstated the degeneration of shading in this description, for side by side with the development of the flat, linear and pattern-like treatment there continued the subtly-blended

Fig. 136.

graduations, particularly in the rendering of the flesh. In pictures of sacred personages the heads and hands are rendered in blended tones of considerable variety of strength, while the draperies are treated in the other way.

The Bayeux Tapestry belongs to the awakening of artistic expression. The forms are indicatively rendered in flat tints. The colours of these tints are only roughly appropriate, but they are not perverse. The thought is always of the real thing. But this does not prevent a horse being mainly

blue (obviously for a dark horse) with one leg red and another yellow. The outlines are not in one uniform colour, such as black or brown, but in one or another of the eight or more stock colours, so that sometimes a dark colour is outlined with a pale one, as blue with yellow. The masses are covered with thin threads of wool laid down with the same, in transverse lines, about three-eighths of an inch apart. The internal lines are in the same colour as the outline of that part, and both are in fairly thick outline stitch.

Fig. 137.

As the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries progressed there came an increasing feeling for reality. The lines of the drapery flow more easily, and it is evident that though the shading is simple it is no longer a reminiscence of former practice dying into pattern, but is being used to express the truth. It is very important to notice the use of an extremely delicate tint, even in cases which seem somewhat coarse. The internal form is defined by lines, and these are supported by a fairly strong tone, but there is also a very delicate tint, hardly darker than the general

colour of the piece. This pale tone is the coming in of blending—blending both for the sake of beauty and of reality. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries developed this subtle graduation, modelling the form into softly-rendered ups and downs, and carrying this so far that the

Fig. 138.

figure underneath gets forgotten. With such a treatment of drapery—for it is in the drapery that the technique is best seen—overlaid with a rich pattern in outline, the Gothic manner comes to an end. Lights then begin to appear on one side and shades on the other—but already Italy had passed into the rational shading which was one of the artistic discoveries of the Renaissance.

To illustrate the decorative use of shade in mass we may take Fig. 136, where the parts marked with a dot may be painted a blue or bluish grey—a colour which will serve as a shade colour in certain places and as a local colour in others.

Fig. 137 illustrates a treatment which was much used in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries —a symmetrical outline is shaded rationally. The design is so contrived that though the forms are differently shaded on the two sides the amount of shade balances.

In all these cases as in the common irregular floral pattern, such as Fig. 138, the patches of shade must be musically distributed, as in the marbled pattern (Fig. 47).

CHAPTER 32

DEPTH AND VOLUME

THE wandering of the eye in obedience to a subjective mood of mind spreads decoration evenly, if so we may speak, over the surface of things, and make it veil-like.

By depth, or thickness, we mean an appearance of some parts of the decoration being nearer to, some parts further from, the spectator. To some extent an appearance of depth is hardly avoidable. Three causes contribute to this result: (1) The various focal values of colours—the blue end of the spectrum retiring, the red end approaching. (2) The apparent nearness of thick lines against thin ones of the same colour. (3) The apparent remoteness of small forms. These we would call the *natural* ways of expressing depth, or distance.

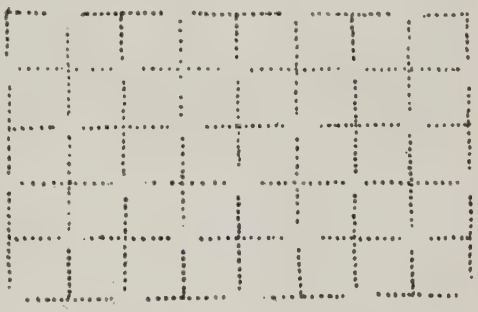


FIG. 139.

If we paint some of the crosses in Fig. 139 with vermilion or orange, and the intermediate ones with, say, cerulean blue, we shall have the effect, inevitably, of two networks, one red, one blue, the red one in front of the blue one. As darkness and paleness in the colours influence the effect, experiments with different hues and tones of colour will produce different results.

The effect of nearness and remoteness by different thicknesses of line is illustrated by Fig. 140. A form which is partly broad and partly thin is not flat in effect.

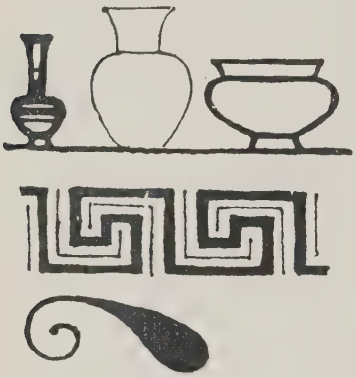


Fig. 140.

The third case—the apparent remoteness of small forms—is illustrated in many of our diagrams. It is not that we think the small form *is* further away, but that we feel the same sensation as we associate with nearness and distance. The eye, as it were, expands its vision when it looks at a wide mass, and contracts it when it sees a small, or narrow one, and apparently links this experience with its experience of distance.

The emotional or moral value of the sense of depth and space is in its giving a feeling of freedom, vivaciousness, exhilaration and gaiety.

Compare *A* and *B* (Fig. 141). *A*, which is by comparison solemn and perhaps somewhat sleepy, is yet vigorous. Monochromatic colouring is however worse than sleepy, it is deadening.

We would make a distinction between the words *depth* and *volume*. By *volume* we refer to the expression of bulk. If we shade a sphere, or such a fruit as a cherry, up to its full roundness we express volume in the maximum degree, though not at its maximum extent. A plum, an orange, a melon, is greater in extent.

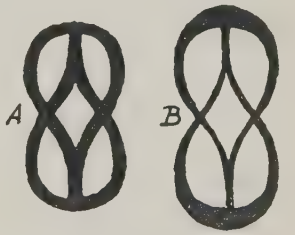


Fig. 141.

We might imagine spheres of all sizes, from tiny to vast, as representing a scale of volumes. If we imagine a number of these of one size (Fig. 142) spread over an area, and shaded to full roundness, we may speak of the " pattern " as of such and such a " volume "—volume of size No. 7, may be.

We can obviously decrease the volume in two ways : by making the spheres smaller, and by making the shading paler. As the diagram stands, unshaded, in Fig. 142, there is no volume at all in it. If we made some of the circles thicker in line than others they would come forward, and the others would sink back, and a sense of depth would be created. But depth is not volume. The " emotional and moral " value of volume is not

the same as that of depth. It does not give a feeling of freedom, but of a certain closeness and cogency of statement, authoritative and domineering. This quality diminishes as the shading becomes paler, till a stage is reached when, although the shading is complete in the sense of exposing the form completely, it lies so quietly behind the other qualities that freedom and lightness may find expression—as, for example, in Italian painting of the Fifteenth Century.

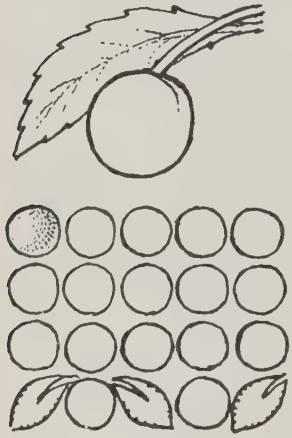


Fig. 142.

In applying volume the artist must decide what degree of it is appropriate to a particular case. Upon a fan he might determine that the volume should be slight. He must therefore either make his decoration up of small forms well rounded, or of larger forms palely shaded. The more forcibly the forms are shaded, the smaller they must be.

Decoration may have a flat effect in the sense of the forms throughout being of equal volume—like a thick veil—but this may not suffice to make it agree with a particular case, for the proper volume for that case may be slighter—the veil thinner. Hence Holbein's manner seems wrong

for stained glass. Those figures of plants in *The Craftsman's Plant Book*, which are from MATTHIOLUS, are good illustrations of a fairly thick volume. In the apples and plums, for instance, the thickness is about equal to the width of the fruit.

Let us return now to *depth*. Depth is not so much demonstrated as inferred. Some things, such as mountains and clouds, we *know* to be

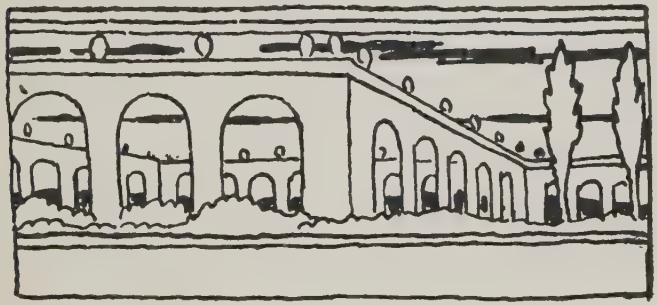


FIG. 143.

distant. We *know* that things are sent back into the distance by perspective. Hence considerable depth may be *recorded*, though not enforced. We may *know* that some of the forms are away back in the distance, we may even *feel* distance, but we do not *see* it unless it is forced upon us. Shading and aerial perspective are the chief agents in this enforcement. If we allow the colours on distant things to be much the same, or actually the same as on near things, and tones on distant and near things alike, the distance is

pulled forward, and the near things are pushed back, and yet depth may be felt. It must be noted that this confusion of distances is often observable in the aspect of nature, as the Impressionists have shown us.

The question arises whether depth ought to be felt at all in decoration. The dogma that decoration should be flat has been accepted too readily, or, perhaps, has been misunderstood. It may be doubted whether we take any delight at all in flatness, certainly we take no delight in the appearance of a thing being flattened.

That there is an emotional or æsthetic value in depth there can be no doubt. The degree to which its expression is admitted in decoration depends partly upon the degree of our insistence upon the quality of *truth*. This quality of truth is the statement of a thing being precisely what it is, as that a room is 30 by 20 by 15 feet high. If we want to feel, when we are in such a room, that it is of that size, our demand for truth is at its maximum.

But decoration always reduces the truth, and makes the thing appear, to some extent, what it is not. We have already spoken of this in Chapter 10. Therefore, what we are concerned with here is how far the quality of depth may be allowed to interfere with truth. What, for instance, is the size of a room ? Is it what we know it to be, or what we like to think it is ?

MICHELANGELO'S glorious ceiling in the Sistine Chapel is a falsification of the shape and position of it. As we look into its magic depth we are not conscious quite of where the ceiling is. If we set ourselves to find out we can certainly do so. The windows help us to do that, and to-day we are somewhat surprised that such tangible evidences of position could so easily have been put out of mind by men in the Sixteenth Century. The management of the shading in the ceiling, by which the forms are given bulk, is of a kind which gives depth to the whole subject. If we compare with it the treatment of the *Last Judgment* we see there rather a shading for volume than for depth. We are struck by the flatness of the wall—as if we did not want it so flat, but wanted depth.

LEONARDO'S *Last Supper*, at Milan, gains by the suggestion in it of the continuation of space beyond the wall. (See Plate IV.)

As the Renaissance developed, the expression of spaciousness developed also. The limits of things, and not merely of rooms only, became lost, and a feeling of depth was sought on every hand. The pottery and porcelain of the Eighteenth Century well exhibit the delight in depth rather than in surface. A certain undulation of surface came into vogue, groups of flowers and groups of figures brought the surface forward here or there. This expression of depth

was attended with only slight expression of volume—the shading was soft and tender. Hence, in spite of the pictorial character of some of the decoration, as that on fans, the effect of it is more like a marbled pattern than a picture—certainly than a picture in the manner of Rubens and the Victorians.

The Renaissance had made two great artistic discoveries—it became conscious of *spatial relationship*—the melodic relationship of masses, bulks and spaces between them, and it discovered *rational shading*, and rational shading which not only developed the exhibition of a thing's shape, but which linked things together in wide, comprehensive grouping. Perspective and foreshortening were fully mastered, and ambition to use these great powers, and to express so exalted a conception, led to such decoration as denied the presence of wall and ceiling, and peopled the air with floating figures, and opened a vista up into Heaven itself.

But the further off a thing was the smaller, and therefore the less important, it became. Hence the vista into Heaven became ludicrous. CIMABUE, in his mosaic in the Duomo, at Pisa, made his Christ vast, and so brought Him near to the worshipper; nearer than the wall itself. But in the deep vistas of the later Renaissance the heavenly personages are only equal to birds in importance—remote and negligible.

MICHELANGELO in his Sistine ceiling avoided the main difficulty. The vault begins on either side with the huge prophets and sibyls. Above them rise the athletæ, smaller than might have been expected, and so thrown well up. But he did not then open the middle of the vault to the sky, as did later artists; he carried architectural forms over from side to side, but without emphasis, and between them placed compositions —the Creation, Fall, etc.—transversely, and closed the vista upwards, or even drew the ceiling down a little.

Later artists, as we have said, opened the vault to the sky, and pretended that the building did not close over as a roof, but went on upward. A notable example is in the church of the Carmine at Florence. Its perspective is much admired, but as the effect is wrong unless one stands in a particular place it is difficult to see how success can be claimed for it. And a similar treatment at the Villa d'Este, near Tivoli, is shown to the visitor as a joke. As the spectator moves about the vertical pillars of the painted ceiling seem to fall, now this way, now that.

In the successful ceiling at San Pantaleone, Venice, by FUMIANI, this ludicrous effect is avoided by the artist emphasising the horizontals —the shaded underside of the projecting cornices —instead of the vertical columns.

But all the skill and genius, which art now and

again can command, cannot get rid of such awkward intrusions as real shadows falling across the work, obvious material facts, as a window jamb, or a window frame. These upset the illusion. To decorate the dome of the Pantheon with a perspective vista into Heaven is rendered impossible by the sun's movement, and the real light, and the real Heaven above — visible through the one central window, or hole — shaming the artificial. Lit only from below, by reflection from the ground, there is more chance of success.

Fig. 144.

For it would seem that though the masters of the Renaissance discovered spatial relationship, and rational and comprehensive shading, they came to misunderstand the scope of *depth* in decoration, and they had no interest in the quality of *truth*. The annexed diagram may illustrate the depth which may be expressed on wall and ceiling, according to the practice of the earlier and the later periods of the Renaissance—the earlier (with which our present taste agrees) on the right, the latter on the left.

CHAPTER 33

COLOUR EXPRESSES VITALITY

THE abstract idea of life is not that it is stagnant existence, but ceaseless action. Indeed, if anything can express vitality, it is variety. Hence the artistic objection to the machine-repeated is in the obvious evidence of sameness—of repetition which denies the cardinal principle of life—that no two things, and no two moments, are exactly alike.

By colour we can define one thing from another, and that use of it is valuable, for it makes for clearness of thought about different things. But colour has also, like musical sound, the power of subtle and profound suggestion of thought—of thought too elusive, too vague, too tragic, or too ecstatic for close definition. It is this power which we sum up in the phrase *The Revel of Colour*.

The most vivacious colour we possess is red, the most vivacious contrast of colour is black and white. Hence a use of black and red on white (Fig. 145) gives us a startlingly vivacious revel. We should note that if we use two reds (say vermilion for the centre diamond and indian

red or crimson on either side) we increase the vivacity.

Vivacity is, however, both quiet and violent. It is quiet if we use colours which are similar, or,

Fig. 145.

as we commonly say, in harmony, and violent, if we use colours which are unlike, or in contrast.

Yellow, which in its nature is two-thirds of white, is softly in harmony with white, and boldly in contrast with black. If we colour the diamonds in Fig. 146 with gamboge and ochre we obtain in

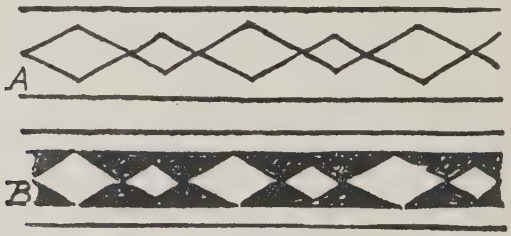


Fig. 146.

A a quiet expression of vitality, and in *B* a violent one.

A range of hues varying slightly cannot fail to produce a pleasant and living, if quiet, effect. We may make, therefore, a *scale* by placing on either side of a colour hues differing from it,

varying towards the two opposites to which it is central—as blue varies on one side through green-blue to green, and on the other through violet-blue to violet (Fig. 147).

The two ends of the scale are necessarily in

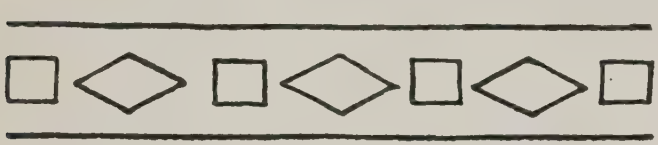


Fig. 147.

contrast, as green to violet. Such a scale as we have here made is a scale of five hues, and is itself divisible into three scales of three hues each: violet, violet-blue, blue; violet-blue, blue, green-blue; blue, green-blue, green (Fig. 148).

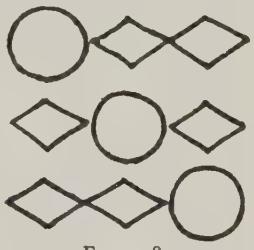


Fig. 148.

It is easy, therefore, to make from the same scale of harmonious colour marked differences of expression, separating form from form (Fig. 149).

Thus do we use the contrasting qualities of the scale and make the vivacity the bolder. How important this use is, in the case of, say, flowers and leaves, and figures and trees, where distinction is desirable, is very evident.

We may most reasonably limit a scale to those hues which have obvious kinship to the parent

hue, as violet and green both belong to blue. But if we continue the scale, as we readily might, we pass beyond green to yellow, and beyond

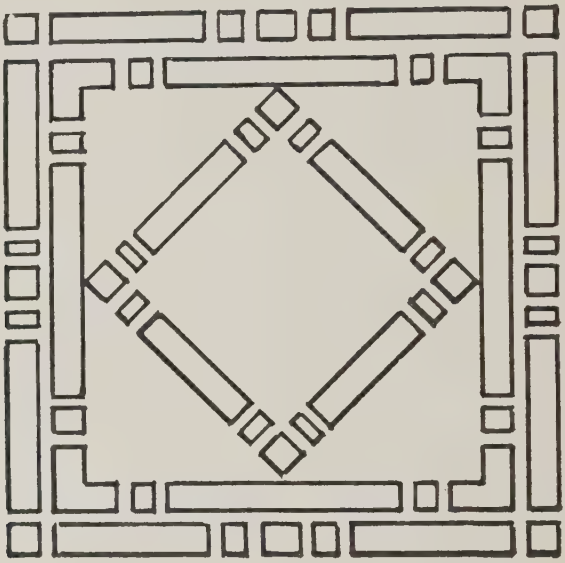


Fig. 149.

violet to red. If red were the parent hue it would reach its legitimate limits in orange and violet, but continue beyond to yellow and blue (Fig. 150).

Fig. 150.

Touches, jewels, or small patches of these extreme colours are very valuable in the use of a scale.

We have already noticed the vivacity-expressing power of *contrast*. There are four kinds of contrast (Fig. 151):

(i.) Difference in colour—blue to yellow.

(ii.) Difference in saturation or percentage of colour—rose to crimson.

(iii.) Difference of paleness and darkness—pink to chocolate, or pale prussian blue to bronze.

(iv.) Clearness and obscurity—amber to sand, cobalt to indigo, crimson to indian red.

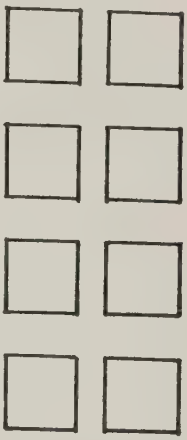


Fig. 151.

The *obscure* colours are particularly valuable, ivory, yellow ochre, raw amber, slate, dove, mole, russet, and greys of all kinds.

A scale to be really serviceable, or *full scale*, must include the *pale*, the *dark*, the *rich*, the *obscure*, two colours at least which are akin or in *harmony*, and two at least which are in *contrast*.

These wide requirements can be met with three hues only, such as:

Bright cobalt, deep indigo, ivory, or rich crimson, flesh-colour, french grey (Fig. 152).

It is instructive to make a *full scale* by raising the colours into what we may call the sky or celestial hues, and debasing them also into the

earthy hues (Fig. 153). From such an array of, say, nine hues at least, we can pick three or four, or more, which give us ample variety.

We may define the celestial and earthy by such examples as these—raw umber is an earthy green, ash colour is a celestial green, indian red is an earthy version of vermilion, pink a celestial hue of it, slate is a debased blue, pale violet is an exalted blue. The three middle squares of Fig. 153 may be violet, blue, and green, those above may be these colours " exalted," the three below the same debased.

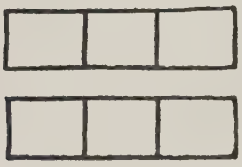


Fig. 152.

It is extremely important to fix upon the *ground colour* of a pattern first. This, unfortunately, is commonly the last to be thought of. Obviously, as it is usually the greatest in extent of all the hues, it plays a very important part. If a piece of work has to be carried out upon a certain ground colour that colour should be carefully matched, and its true character found out. It should at once be given its place on the scale—the little row of squares of colour which is so useful.

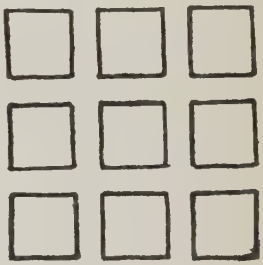


Fig. 153.

Ordinarily in a piece of decoration there are :

(i.) The ground-colour.

(ii.) The first pattern-colour.

(iii.) The second pattern colour, which is more or less in contrast to the first pattern-colour.

Thus a complete scale may be :

Ground.—Écru, and its scale : écru, gold and brown.

First Pattern Colour.—Blue, and its scale : cobalt, pale prussian blue, dark sage green.

Second Pattern Colour.—Orange, and its scale : orange, vermilion and indian red.

These hues will not, of course, occur in the design in equal areas, and we may chart them, therefore, speculatively unequally, as in Fig. 154.

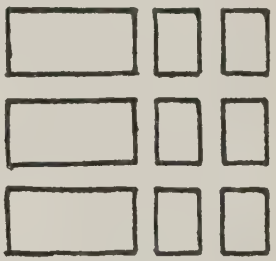


Fig. 154.

It is impossible to lay down rules for the proportions of colours. Those proportional charts of the coloration of examples which we see sometimes in books on colour are worthless, because the value of colours varies with their interrelational use. In *A* (Fig. 155) if the diamond is red and the four corners green, the red diamond is in area half of the rectangle, and therefore equal to the green. So, too, in *B* the red equals the green—but with how different an effect, for we know that if we continue the sub-

division long enough the effect will be that of yellow.

Proportion nevertheless is the soul of colouring. To master proportion it is wise to confine oneself to a limited scale, and preferably a scale of but few hues. The decorator should confine himself in *all* his exercises to this short scale until he has power over it. It is indeed because they were limited to a set range of hues that the old craftsmen became masters of colour, and the oriental craftsmen are masters of it for the same reason.

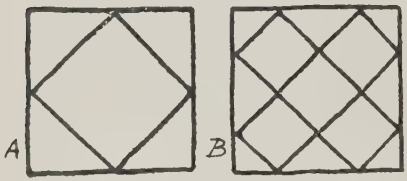


Fig. 155.

It is important, therefore, to try one size for a colour and then another. It may not be the colour that is wrong, but the size of the patch of it, for not only may the proportion be wrong according to our æsthetic prejudice, but, of course, the colour is affected by what surrounds it. The colour at the edge of a form undergoes change, the colour in the middle retaining its normal hue, hence the colour values of patches of different sizes differ.

A hue should be supported by its like, as blue by dull violet or slate, cobalt by ultramarine, emerald by blue, etc. The supporting hues are often broken and dull in comparison to the colour which they support.

This act of support involves the grouping together of kindred hues. The design, therefore, falls into large masses which balance or contrast with one another. In Fig. 156 colour the flower with different reds or pinks, and the leaves with different blues. Green, of course, is a blue.

Fig. 156.

Sometimes, even though this law is observed, sharply different hues will touch. Such disposition the artist cunningly arranges so that his sharp accents fall in the right place. Colour the pools in Fig. 157 with colours supporting one another, leading from red, through purple to blue, till contrasts are juxtaposed.

Fig. 157.

The use together of different *strengths* or shades of the same hue produces a gloomy effect. Silks and wools for embroidery are sorted by the manufacturer and salesman into sets of shades of the same hue. This is a useful classification for sale and purchase, but often the mistake is made of assuming that these shades are to be used together, especially in shading. It is a good rule that as the strength

varies, so should the hue vary. As for example we may shade royal blue with paler and more violet tints and darker and greener tints, or *vice versâ*.

By *true contrasts* we mean true optical contrasts, as when two coloured lights from two lanterns, shining upon the same white sheet, produce white light. The theory of this and much valuable information is given in OGDEN ROOD'S *Modern Chromatics*, and in Sir W. ABNEY'S *Colour Vision*.

Optically, white light is produced by three coloured lights—red (vermilion + rose-madder) green (viridian) and blue (cobalt). Mixtures (by light—not of pigment) of two of these, contrast with the third, or are *complementary* to it, as we commonly say.

Red and green lights mixed make *yellow*.

Red and blue make *rose*.

Blue and green make *sea-green*.

The yellow, rose, and sea-green are all twice as light as any of the primary lights, and are each two-thirds of white. Every one knows we cannot get a deep yellow.

These three pairs are, of course, not the only pairs which will make white when compounded. Divide the spectrum into two, three, or as many parts as you like, and find a colour corresponding to each part, and the several parts together must make white. Mix the parts and make broken

colours, and these broken colours will unite into white.

These complementary contrasts are not, however, of as much practical importance to the artist as guides to composition as they may promise to be—for several reasons. One reason is that psychology enters into the case. Just as the old system of colour mixture (red, blue, and yellow paints) was exalted erroneously into a system of colour-harmonisation, so may the new system of the mixture of coloured lights be. For the artistic problem is not what is optically true, but what is agreeable to us. For example, we are as likely to regard red as the contrast to blue as yellow. Although yellow is the true optical contrast to blue (a yellow, of course, of a particular hue and a blue of a particular hue), yet we can more easily see reconciliation between blue and yellow than between blue and red. This is probably because the focal value of red is more remote from blue than the focal value of yellow. This is indeed an optical reason after all.

The tyranny of the old rule that harmony was got when the colours present summed up into grey, or black, or white, led people grievously astray. Never, they said, fifty years ago, put blue with green—put red with green—the true pigmental contrast, or what turned red into black !

And we to-day are just as likely to be tyran-

nised over by supposed laws of harmony, as if neutralisation were the first canon of beauty.

If we like blue and green together it is because, at the moment when we have that opinion, our "æsthetic expectation" is requiring the gentle suggestion of vitality which slight difference gives. Sometimes we even like irritating combinations.

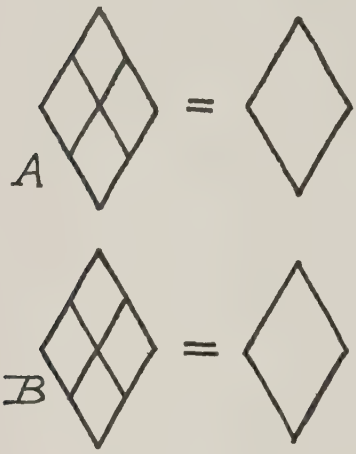


Fig. 158.

Though we make use of our knowledge of complementary colours in arranging the harmonies and contrasts of our decoration, we learn also from them that certain effects come which we do not expect, and do not want. These effects are not of serious moment except in the cases of blue and yellow, and of red and green.

The artist is so used to blue and yellow making green that he falls into the error of thinking that if he makes a blue ground, and upon it puts a pattern in yellow lines and blots, he will give to the blue a greenish cast. Instead he will give it a whitish or greyish cast. Colour the four diamonds *A* (Fig. 158) blue and yellow, and the large diamond beside it white. Many a time a painter

has tried to warm up or give a more greenish tone to a bluish shadow by dusting yellow over it, only to find a totally different effect. One or two instances of this mixture of lights occurring are: A blue shawl, 6 feet long, had across one end of it a line of yellow; seen at a few feet distance it appeared white. A fish-grey material for a lady's garment was seen on near view to be in stripes (about an eighth of an inch wide) of bright blue and yellow. A child sent to a shop with half a sovereign in a blue-lined purse, opening the purse saw only a sixpence. Going home to explain, the sixpence is taken out and becomes the gold coin again.

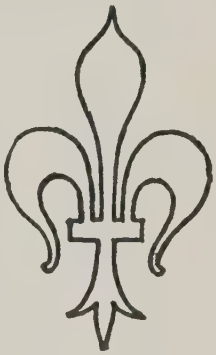


Fig. 159.

It is impossible, consequently, to have a pattern in thin yellow line, or small yellow spots, on a blue ground—at least so that it will look yellow. Obviously, as the line or patch widens the yellow colour comes into effect. Consequently such a form as a *flower-de-luce* as on the old French arms is in effect a pattern of blue, yellow and silver-grey.

The other most notable instance of colour-change by juxtaposition is when green and red are intermingled—they form yellow (*B*, Fig. 158). Therefore, colour those four diamonds red and

green, two and two, and the large diamond yellow.

To get the two colours to make actually a pure yellow the red and green must be not only optically the correct hues, but they must be bright lights. If we juxtapose pigments, or wools, or any materials, we are dealing with colours already dimmed by being themselves only reflections of such a part of the white light falling upon particular materials as they throw back. Hence the yellow will be tawny, or perhaps mustard-colour. And, of course, a slight change or wrongness in the hue makes a difference in the effect. As, for instance, a blue too " royal," and a yellow too creamy, or orange, will not make a pure silver-grey, but one flushed with red—red being in excess in both cases.

These effects of colour-mixture are to be used, as well as to be noted as warnings. Why should we not get our silver-grey with blue and yellow ? Moreover, of course, as, say, in a material which is subject to folds and which consequently presents the colours differently, as at their greatest breadth (*A*, Fig. 160) where the material is seen directly, and contracted in width where it is seen at an angle, *B*, the colours will mix in *B*, and not perhaps in *A*, where the bands may be so wide as to be separately distinguished.

Hence, we see that by differently using our colours, knowing well that they will mix in certain

cases, we increase the range of power and give to our work a degree of liveliness from its constantly changing as it is seen differently. Many good effects are got in embroidery by stitching down one colour with another.

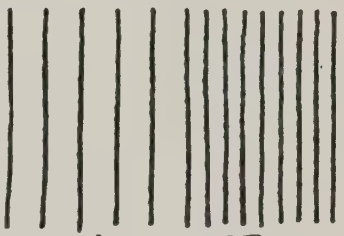


Fig. 160.

Juxtaposition produces two kinds of effect. When the colours are in patches too small, or narrow, to be separately visible, they mix, according to the laws of the mixture of lights. When the patches are large enough to be separately distinguished the more brilliant affect their less brilliant neighbours by inducing in them a tinge of their own complementaries. Thus blue surrounding grey will make it look yellower than it is. We see this distinctly if we want a small form, as the spot in Fig. 161, to be of the same colour as, say, the broad band below. It is impossible that they can *look* the same unless we make them different in such a manner as to compensate for the change made by the colour surrounding the spot. If we made them the same no one would believe they were the same.

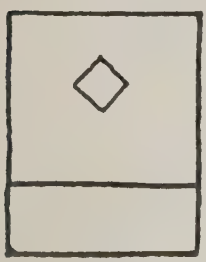


Fig. 161.

Our diagrams being drawn for convenience in thick black line falsify some of the matters of which we have spoken. They illustrate, however, another valuable law :

(*a*) Black dusted over a colour carries it towards green (*A*, Fig. 162).

(*b*) White carries it towards violet (*B*, Fig. 162). Colour the flower, and when thoroughly dry work a pattern over it in thin white lines.

The printers understand this well, for by using red and black, in different gradations upon white paper, they gain a considerable range of colours. There are, (1) red ; (2) red speckled with white = cold or crimson red ; (3) the same speckled also with black = a dull, and not so cold a version of it ; (4) red speckled with black = a brownish, burnt sienna-like colour ; (5) grey of a rather greenish tone ; and (6) black.

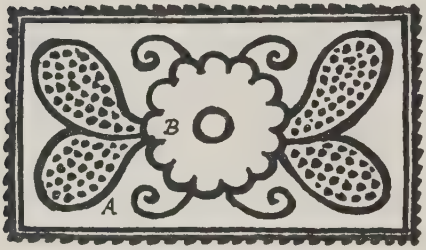


Fig. 162.

To the decorator it is important also to study the effect upon colour of greater or less light falling upon it. Rood has a good deal to say about this. Experiment is the decorator's best guide, for, of course, he has to deal with actual particular instances, and not with hypothetical cases.

It is interesting to watch the changing effect of colours as daylight fades. Red soon turns black, a greyish tone creeps over everything, but some remarkable effects are observable. In one experiment several persons defined a colour as yellow (seen in very dim light) which was in reality blue.

Colour-mixture (mixture of coloured lights) also takes place by reflected light. Place a reel of blue silk upon a piece of yellow silk material, and the reflection of the yellow into the blue will produce a whitish colour. Again, material placed in different positions changes its colour. No one knows this better than the picture painter when dealing with a folded silken material.

The different focal values of colours is important—the colours at the red end of the spectrum approach, those at the blue end retire. Hence, as we have shown in Chapter 32, a diversely coloured pattern cannot appear flat. These varying focal values are sometimes troublesome. Thus a word in which the letters are of different colours becomes almost illegible, and sometimes the eye is tormented. It is obliged by the act of reading to try to focus the letters together, and cannot do it. In a pattern this trouble does not readily arise, because the eye may wander.

CHAPTER 34

DISTRIBUTION OF COLOUR

When the scale or range of colours has been decided upon they must be distributed. *It is best to distribute them one by one.* First, that is to say, take one of the colours, and with it colour any patch of the design. Then colour another patch with it also—a patch some distance away. When these two are coloured choose carefully a third to be also of the same colour, then a fourth, and so on (Fig. 163). In each case it is of the utmost importance to be quite sure that you want the colour where you think you do. Never colour a patch " on spec." Never put colour on to see if it is right afterwards. If care is taken, if before a patch is coloured the other patches similarly coloured are viewed with the wandering eye, there should be little danger of a false step being taken. If you feel you hesitate to colour a patch,

Fig. 163.

do not colour it. Trust your sensibility that you have distributed the colour as much as is needed.

After distributing one colour proceed to another, choosing one near akin to the first, and putting it near the first, so that the one supports the other.

If when all the colours are distributed there yet remain some patches uncoloured, either leave

Fig. 164.

them plain, or find a neutral colour (as by mixing all the others together), and put it on the uncoloured patches, or upon some of them.

In distributing colours it is important to colour forthwith any patches which must be of a particular colour—as the flesh, or colours in heraldry. When these are being coloured the relative positions of the patches must be carefully watched, and if they seem not to make a harmonious

distribution some means must be found to correct it.

Thus in this design with the shields, if the lower part of the shield on the left is to be red, and the left side of the middle shield is also to be red, and there is no red in the shield on the right, it follows that there will be too much red on the left side of the panel. It would be advisable, therefore, to use a duller red for the shield on the left, and to repeat it in one or two of the loops on the right. The brighter red of the middle shield might be repeated in the strap of the shield on the right.

Fig. 165.

If this use of dull and bright red is objected to, and both are to be the same, then there is no other way of proceeding but to use red on any forms, whatever they may mean, on the right side.

This miscolouring is by no means so offensive as one would think it should be. So pleasant to us is colour balance, that if we have applied colour in certain places legitimately, as green on the tree and ground in Fig. 165, we shall not object to it on the coat of the figure on the left if

thereby we get balance. Nor if we paint the faces and hands legitimately red, shall we be offended with a patch of red on the ground, beneath the left figure, if that produces balance. (The distance in this design we may make blue.)

This peculiarity of distribution we may call the dealing with *commitments*. Another instance of the dealing with commitments is illustrated in Fig. 166.

In this design, if we colour the corner square in one corner blue, we are practically committed to colouring all the corner squares blue, and we should so colour them immediately. We may or may not colour both the diamonds at the corners alike ; it will be safest first to colour four, one at each corner, and then if we feel that we do not want so much more of that colour as the other four will give us, to choose some variation of it for the other four.

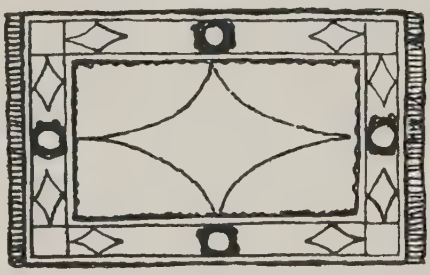


Fig. 166.

It is important to colour all the commitments as they arise, for to colour a small part fully, and then to repeat the colouring throughout, may be unsatisfactory through there being too much of this or that colour.

Sometimes a liability has to be discarded for

the sake of harmony—in Fig. 168 for symmetry. If we colour this with rich hues of about equal power, and leave the faces and hands to be light spots, we shall find it advisable not to colour the faces and hands equally. That is, to colour them all straight off, through commitment, would give us an undesirable distribution. For instance, it would be better for the face of figure III. not to be flesh colour, but for the wallet at his girdle to be flesh colour to form symmetry with the face of figure II.

Similarly it is very important to colour the ground of a design first. Less important in interest as it may be, it yet will probably be of dominating importance in the colour scheme. Many a good design has been spoiled by leaving large tracts to be coloured late.

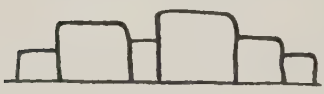


Fig. 167.

It is practically a law in distributing colour that a colour occurs on either side of another colour, probably in different amounts, or we may use another term, and say that one colour leaps over another.

The object of this balance of one colour on either side of another is to prevent the eye from getting away from the middle of the panel and not being able to get back (Fig. 167). We may colour this diagram, from left to right, red, green, blue, red, green, red.

We would emphasise the importance of using some low, dull, obscure colours amongst those in a design. White, also, is always welcome. Pale colours are very valuable—colours so pale as to differ but little from the ground they are upon—as gold upon écru. If we use low, dull, and obscure colours we give richness to the rich colours.

We must not forget the expressiveness of colour. Colours much alike, particularly in hue, as

Fig. 168.

when all are, say, bluish, or when they are alike in tone, when none are dark—give a rather sleepy effect. This is, of course, sometimes needed. We can give our work the cast of solemnity, of gloom, of vivacity, of brightness, and of melodramatic vigour, according as we play upon our pale and dark, rich, pure, or obscure.

And we must not forget that our work may be but one item in a group of many. A vase, for instance, may be like a flower, a piece of single colour amidst others. By single colour we mean

done in a scale which does not range beyond similar hues, or at least has the contrasting hues in very small quantity. The persons in the room —even the flowers which are brought in must all be remembered.

We need only mention the great value of variety of hue, and of strength, in patches of colour which are nominally the same. Every art student knows the lifeless effect produced by the flat chromolithographic colour-printing in such as book as OWEN JONES'S *Grammar of Ornament*.

Colour effects are greatly enhanced by leaving an edge of white around a patch of colour, or at one side of it. Instances will occur as the reader colours the diagrams in this book. A band is, therefore, not necessarily coloured right across from side to side, but only down the middle. Examples of this treatment are very common in illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages. There, too, will be seen two other similar modes of embellishment. One is to make a line of colour two- or three-fold by narrow strips of slightly different colours—in the manner of shading. The other is to put a pattern in fine white lines over the colour. Compare in this connection what is said in Chapter 12.

CHAPTER 35

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

We readily forget that art not only has specific social value, but that its relationship to social affairs is affected by the peculiar attitude of the artist's mind.

There is such a thing as *thinking socially*. When we think socially, we sort out from the whole mass of our ideas and predilections those which our social instinct tells us are shared by our fellows. It is not within a man's power to think socially if his instinct and his mind do not work in that way, any more than an essentially disagreeable man can make himself good company for others. But when they do so work, he is able to specify the social part of his ideas, and to act upon them, or in the light of them.

In the Eighteenth Century the social mind was strongly in evidence. Johnson and Reynolds both typify the determination of the time to sink personal and individual predilections in loyalty to a general social understanding.

A very different state of things arose in the

Nineteenth Century, and we to-day, for all our boasting, are not much better, if any, than our Victorian grandfathers—for we continually act bombastically, and with an eye to advertisement, as our new buildings abundantly show.

Further, the social mind is not the communal mind ; it is not, that is to say, an ingathering of the sense and ideas of the whole community, which embraces men of all sorts, but is essentially aristocratic. In sorting out those ideas of ours which we feel are shared by our fellows, we think only of those as our fellows who are of a type we respect.

Perhaps in nothing is the influence of the social mind more important than in completing the theory of what is beauty. In our early chapters we have grounded beauty upon the æsthetic and intellectual constituents of the individual, claiming that what beauty is is differently assessed by every person, and is, therefore, relative to personality.

To those who oppose this view, and insist that beauty is fixed, or absolute, and exists in its perfection apart from human interpretation, we reply that their view is sound, in practice, if we admit the winnowing by the social mind. For, though all men's notions of the beautiful may differ, yet they differ only in part. The main expanse in all is alike ; it is the fringe which differs. Hence beauty is fixed so far as there is

agreement about it amongst educated socially-minded people.

Taste, after all, is social. It has something to do with good manners, and good manners with sound judgment and wise decision rendered when a sense of educated opinion is in mind—but in mind not as a law, but as a guide. The development of taste depends more upon the will to bring one's work into harmony with that of educated people than upon study of artistic technique. Even the study of the history of art, which should help the artist to discard the accidental, the transitory, and the meretricious, will be of little effect unless it leads to this aristocratic loyalty. Taste is the assessment of the quantities of all the constituents in a whole, proportioning this to that according to their assumed values, various as they may be under this or that note of civilization or culture. If there is emphasis (through a peculiar tendency of the soul) on this or that, the proportions of all the other constituents are brought, by taste, into agreement with it. A particular note of energy or vitality is struck, and style is produced. A spirit is manifested. The archangels, the muses, the saints, form social communities, and yet have their individual differences.

Finally, there may have been forming in the reader's mind the question whether art is, or is not, essentially artificial, that is, whether it is

not constantly an effort away from common workaday experience.

Perdita. For I have heard it said,
There is an Art, which in their pidenesse shares
With great creating-Nature.
Polixenes. Say there be ;
Yet Nature is made better by no meane,
But Nature makes that Meane : so ouer that Art,
(Which you say addes to Nature) is an Art
That Nature makes : you see (Sweet Maid) we marry
A gentler Sien, to the wildest Stocke,
And make conceyue a barke of baser kind
By bud of Nobler race. This is an Art
Which do's mend Nature : change it rather, but
The Art itselfe, is Nature.
Perdita. So it is.
Polixenes. Then make your Garden rich in Gilly'vors,
And do not call them bastards.
Perdita. Ile not put
The Dible in earth, to set one slip of them :
No more than were I painted, I would wish
This youth should say 'twer well :

The Winter's Tale, Act IV., Sc. 3. (4 in the First Folio.)

R. G. H. Photo.

DOORWAY of SALVATOR ROSA's house, No. 30 Via Gregoriana, Rome. *See p.* 41, and Chapter 23. It must be remembered that SALVATOR ROSA was a satirist as well as a painter, and it is as satire that this solution of an artistic problem is to be regarded.

R. G. H. Photo

South Transept of the Duomo, Florence. *See p.* 42.

R. G. H. Photo.

Panel and Inlaid Marble Decoration upon the Campanile, Florence.
See p. 98.

R. G. H. Photo.

REFECTORY of the CONVENT of STA MARIA DELLE GRAZIE, Milan, with the *Cenacolo*, or *Last Supper*, by LEONARDO DA VINCI, with the decoration above, also by him. The defect at the right side of the photograph is due to persons moving in front of the camera. The vaulting is painted blue, with stars upon it, the lunettes are a rich umber brown, the ceiling of the picture itself is blue-grey. The picture does not therefore appear so deceptively recessed as it does in the monochrome photograph.

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